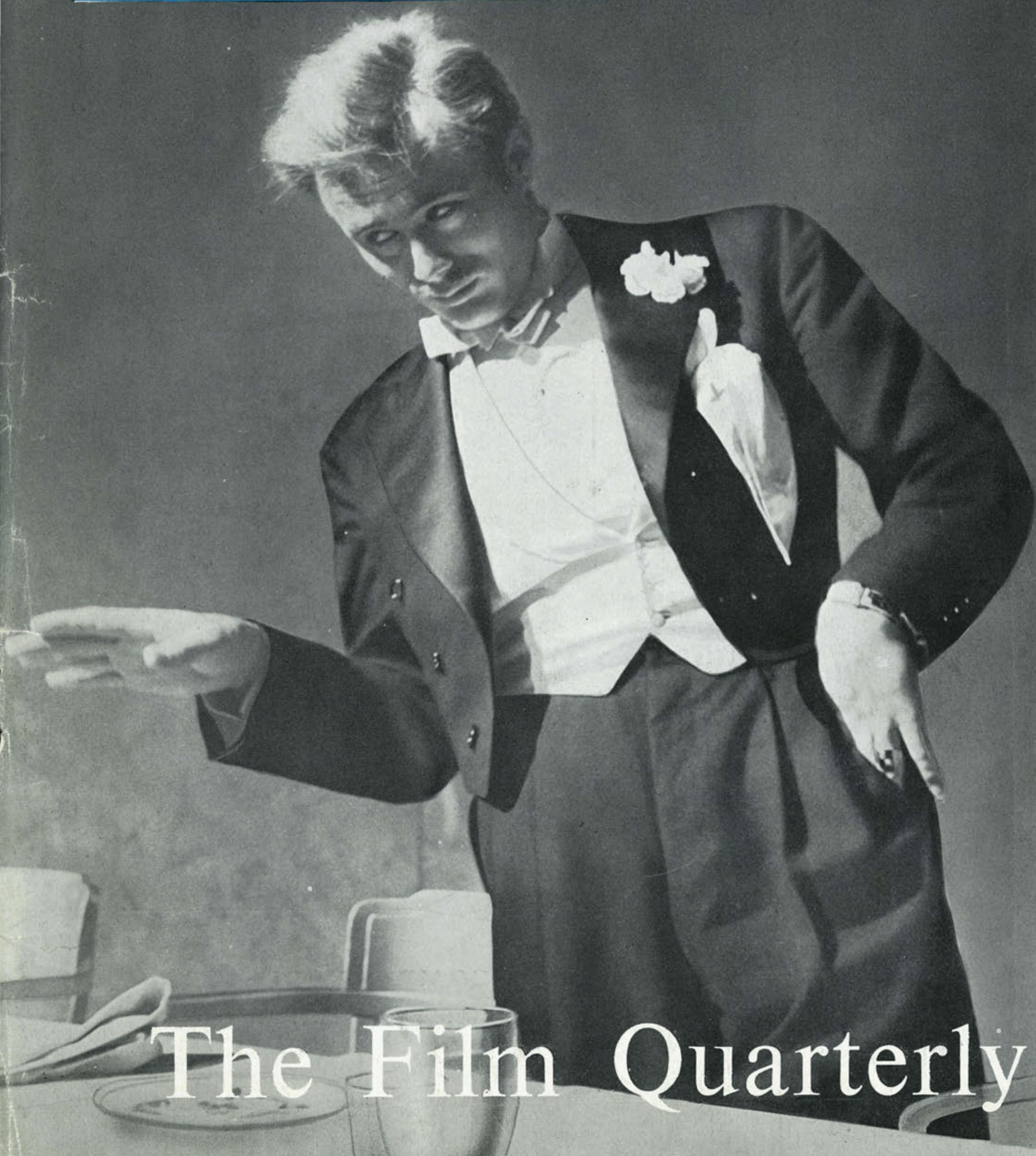


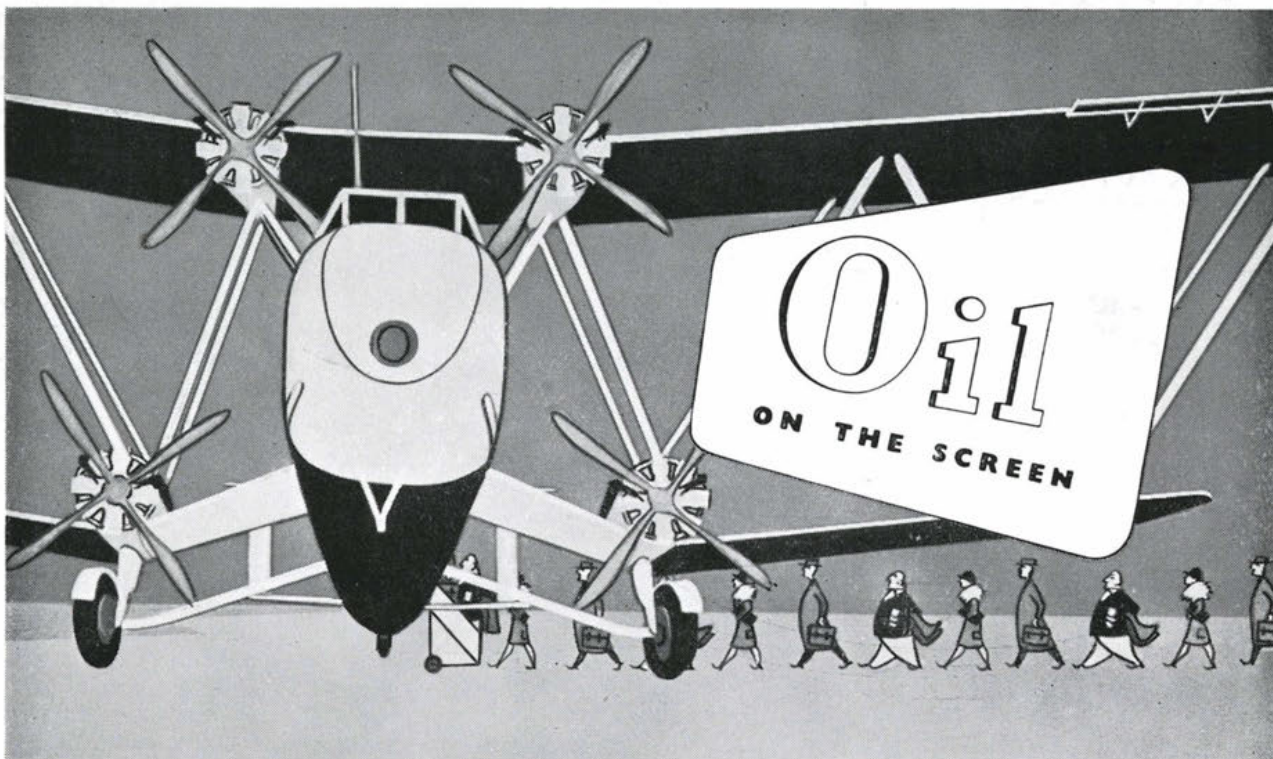
SPRING 1956

Three Shillings and Sixpence

SIGHT AND SOUND



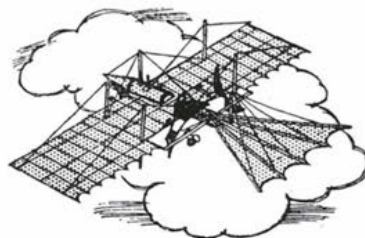
The Film Quarterly



"THE POWER TO FLY"

This 20-minute Technicolor film uses both cartoon and model techniques to show the development of the modern aircraft from Leonardo da Vinci's studies of bird flight to the jet aircraft of today.

It includes the highlights of aviation history—Sir George Cayley's glider, the Wright Brothers' first powered flight in 1903, Bleriot's channel crossing in 1909—and ends with a review of the latest jet aircraft.



A SERIES of films, sponsored by The British Petroleum Company, has been made to illustrate those chapters in the story of the oil industry which are of more popular interest.

Each of these films has been made to entertain as well as instruct and they are already enjoying a wide distribution in many countries. They are available to any recognised organisation and include those of special

interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. One of these films is given a brief description here, and details of the others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge.



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THE BRITISH PETROLEUM COMPANY LIMITED

★PETROLEUM FILMS BUREAU, 29 NEW BOND STREET, W.1

LECTURE DATES

January—March, 1956

JANUARY

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Lecture</i>	<i>Lecturer</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
5	7.15 p.m.	Animation	Lotte Reiniger	Abbey Gateway, Reading	Reading Film Society
6-8	Weekend Course	Appreciation of the Art of the Film	G. Wooller-Jennings	Grantley Hall, Yorks.	County Council of the W. Riding of Yorks. Educ. Committee
6	7.30 p.m.	Who Makes a Film?	A. W. Hodgkinson	Gresham College	Girl Guides' Assoc.
9	11.30 a.m.	Film Appreciation	Stanley Reed	Missenden Abbey	Bucks. Educ. Comtte.
12	7.30 p.m.	Film Appreciation	A. W. Hodgkinson	Bristol Aeroplane Co., Filton	Bristol Aeroplane Co.
22	One-Day School	Film Appreciation	John Huntley	Shrublands Youth & Adult Centre, Gorleston	County Borough of Gt. Yarmouth Educ. Committee
23	10.00 a.m.	From Camera to Screen	Stanley Reed and John Huntley	National Film Theatre	London County Council for L.C.C. Schoolchildren
24	"	" "	" "	" "	" "
25	"	" "	" "	" "	" "
26	"	" "	" "	" "	" "
29	2.15 p.m.	Activities of the B.F.I.	A. W. Hodgkinson	Missenden Abbey	Bucks. Educ. Comtte.
31	4.00 p.m.	French Films	Stanley Reed	City of London School Mod. Languages Soc.	City of London School

FEBRUARY

7	8.00 p.m.	Enjoying the Cinema	A. W. Hodgkinson	Student Movement House, Gower Street	Student Movement House
8	7.15 p.m.	Contemporary Appreciation and Criticism	Catherine de la Roche	The Octagon, Bath	Bath Film Society
13	7.30 p.m.	Art of the Cinema	John Huntley	Co-op. Restaurant, Slough	Slough Co-op. Film Society
17	7.30 p.m.	Film Appreciation	Stanley Reed	Wanstead	Park Residents' Socy.
18-19	Weekend School	Film Appreciation and Film Music	John Huntley	Castle Priory, Wallingford	Slough & District Co-op. Socy. Ltd.
21	6.45 p.m.	Films with a Message	A. W. Hodgkinson	Isleworth Grammar School	Heston & Isleworth Grammar Schools' Film Society
22	7.30 p.m.	Shakespeare and the Cinema	Roger Manvell	The Assembly Rooms, Salisbury	Salisbury Film Society
25	One-Day School	The Coming of Talkies and The Cartoon	A. W. Hodgkinson	Friends Hall, Cotteridge, Birmingham	Worcs. and Class XIV Sub-Union of Adult Schools
29	7.15 p.m.	Film Themes	Stanley Reed	R.A.E., Farnborough	R.A.E. Film Society, Farnborough
29	7.30 p.m.	Film Appreciation	John Huntley	Belstead House, Nr. Ipswich	East Suffolk County Educ. Committee

MARCH

5	8.00 p.m.	Film Appreciation	A. W. Hodgkinson	Vernon Hall, E. Sheen	Vernon Soc., E. Sheen
16	4.15 p.m.	Film Appreciation	John Huntley	County High School (The School Society)	County High School, Braintree, Essex
17-18	Weekend School	Film Appreciation	John Huntley	Shornells, Bostall Heath, Abbey Wood, S.E.2	Dartford Co-op. Film Society
18	9.30 a.m.	The Projector : The Film Programme	Charles Everett	Glyn House, Ewell, Surrey	Surrey County Council's Educ. Depart.

The British Film Institute
QUARTERLY GAZETTE
A Report on the Institute's Activities

No. 17

January, 1956

164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2

FILMS FROM THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

The following films have been added to the loan section of the Library during the last three months.

	Reels Sd/St	Gauge	Running Time
THE NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY			
Amid Raging Beasts	2 St.	16	25 mins.
And so to Work (Richard Massingham)	2 Sd.	35	19 mins.
Dream of a Rarebit Fiend	1 St.	16	13 mins.
Kiss, The (U.S.A., 1893)	$\frac{1}{2}$ St.	16	4 mins.
Life of an American Cowboy (Edwin S. Porter)	1 St.	16	14 mins.
Musical Poster	$\frac{1}{2}$ Sd.	16/Col.	5 mins.
Olympic Games, Berlin 1936 (<i>Extract: Prologue and Opening Ceremony</i>)	2 Sd.	16	20 mins.
Pawnshop, The (Chaplin. <i>Extract</i>)	$\frac{1}{2}$ St.	16/35	5 mins.
Romeo and Juliet (U.S.A., c. 1906)	1 St.	16	15 mins.
Tanglewood Story	2 Sd.	16	20 mins.
Trailer 201	4 Sd.	16	40 mins.
Vanishing Lady (Georges Méliès)	$\frac{1}{2}$ St.	16	3 mins.
A Typical German Newsreel	2 Sd.	16/35	15 mins.
Early Edison Shorts	2 St.	16/35	28 mins.
Early Sound Films	2 Sd.	16	15 mins.
Pathé Colour Stencil-tinted Film	1 St.	16/Col.	8 mins.
THE SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY			
Case of Athetoid Infantile Cerebral Palsy with quick movements in a Boy aged 4 years	$\frac{1}{2}$ St.	16/Col.	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ mins.
Case of Hypotonia and Purposeless Movements in a mentally defective child aged 5 years	$\frac{1}{2}$ St.	16/Col.	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ mins.
Case of Reflex (Sonogenic) Epilepsy in a Boy aged 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ years	$\frac{1}{2}$ Sd.	16	2 mins.
Cerebral Palsy Research	2 St.	16	32 mins.
Draught Reflex	2 St.	16	31 mins.
Pollen and Nectar Collection of Bees	1 St.	16	8 mins.
Reproductive Habits of the Kittiwake, The	2 St.	16	28 mins.
Resuscitation of Hypothermic, Supercooled and Frozen Mammals	2 Sd.	16	17 mins.
Treatment of Retracted Nipple with Waller Glass Shell	$\frac{1}{2}$ St.	16	3 mins.
FILMS ON THE ARTS			
Animated Genesis (Joan and Peter Foldes)	2 Sd.	16/Col.	22 mins.
Communications Primer	2 Sd.	16/Col.	20 mins.
John Piper	3 Sd.	16	30 mins.
Rembrandt : Poet of Light	2 Sd.	16	14 mins.
FILMS MADE BY CHILDREN			
Change the Subject (made by boys at Cornwall Mod. School, East Ham)	1 St.	16	8 mins.

SIGHT AND SOUND

Published by the British Film Institute

VOLUME 25 (New Quarterly Series) No. 4 SPRING 1956

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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

***ADVENTURES OF QUENTIN DURWARD, THE** (M.G.M.) Adaptation of Walter Scott's novel about a young Scotsman's adventures at the Court of Louis XI. Some vivacity and humour enliven the competent CinemaScope spectacle. (Robert Taylor, Kay Kendall, Robert Morley; director, Richard Thorpe. Eastmancolor.)

BEL AMI (Gala). Charmless and over-earnest Franco-Austrian adaptation of de Maupassant, with political parallels solemnly underlined. Playing and direction solid but unstylish. (Jean Danet, Renée Faure, Anne Vernon; director, Louis Daquin. Agfacolor.)

BLACK TENT, THE (JAFID) British soldier, wounded during the Libyan campaign, takes refuge in an Arab settlement and marries the sheik's daughter. An intelligent script, effective desert locations, but some lack of drive in the direction. (Anthony Steel, Donald Sinden, Anna Maria Sandri; director, Brian Desmond Hurst; VistaVision, Technicolor.)

BREAD, LOVE AND JEALOUSY (A.B. Pathé) Sequel to *Bread, Love and Dreams*; the mixture as bucolically before, with de Sica and Gina Lollobrigida repeating their amiable performances. (Director, Luigi Comencini.)

***CINERAMA HOLIDAY** (Cinerama Productions) Nothing here is as impressive as the celebrated aeroplane tour in *This Is Cinerama*, but the extended large-screen traveltogue has its striking and effective episodes. Reviewed. (Directors, Robert Bendick, Philippe de Lacey. Technicolor.)

CONQUEROR, THE (R.K.O.) John Wayne as Genghis Khan in Eastern Western. Some violent, spectacular battle scenes and uneasy impersonations of Tartars and Mongols by all concerned. (Susan Hayward, Agnes Moorehead; director, Dick Powell. CinemaScope, Print by Technicolor.)

***COURT JESTER, THE** (Paramount) Danny Kaye as member of Robin Hood band masquerading as court jester to achieve overthrow of tyrannical usurper. Hollywood history guyed with more good humour than wit, though the star brings off some neat strokes of parody. (Glynis Johns, Cecil Parker; directors, Melvin Frank and Norman Panama. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

***DAVY CROCKETT** (Disney) Three romantic episodes in the life of the legendary trapper-politician hero of the Alamo. Adapted from a successful Disney TV series; unexceptionally innocent. (Fess Parker, Buddy Ebsen; director, Norman Foster. Technicolor.)

EXTRA DAY, THE (British Lion) An assistant director, recalling a group of extras for an additional day's filming, becomes involved in their private lives. Standardised treatment of sentimental-comic anecdotes. (Richard Basehart, Simone Simon, George Baker; director, William Fairchild. Eastmancolor.)

FROU FROU (Curzon) The rise to fame of a young singer, with Dany Robin spanning nearly half a century of amours. Some pretty decors occasionally take the edge off the dullness. (Gino Cervi, Philippe Lemaire; director, Augusto Genina. CinemaScope, Eastmancolor.)

GOOD MORNING, MISS DOVE (Fox) Ageing small-town schoolteacher reviews her past life in flashback, remembers good deeds done for deserving pupils. A form-room soap opera with no holds barred. (Jennifer Jones, Robert Stack, Robert Douglas; director, Henry Koster. CinemaScope, Eastmancolor.)

***GRANDES MANOEUVRES, LES** (Films de France) René Clair's latest film is a bitter comedy of love, set in a provincial garrison town some 40 years ago. Some excellent passages, but final impression a bit thin. (Gérard Philipe, Michèle Morgan. Eastmancolor.)

***HELEN OF TROY** (Warners) Some fairly absurd new light on ancient history, with famous lovers romantically whitewashed from first to last time she saw Paris. But the spectacle is spectacular, the siege of Troy lavishly ferocious. (Rossana Podesta, Jacques Sernas; director, Robert Wise. CinemaScope, Warnercolor.)

HELL ON FRISCO BAY (Warners) Familiar rough stuff on the San Francisco waterfront, with an embittered ex-cop tracking down the gang boss who framed him for manslaughter. (Alan Ladd, Edward G. Robinson, Joanne Dru; director, Frank Tuttle. CinemaScope, WarnerColor.)

HOT BLOOD (Columbia) Life and love among the Pasadena gypsies. Impossible script alternates fake folk-wisdom and elementary psychology; some vigorous staging, and Jane Russell. (Cornel Wilde; director, Nicholas Ray. CinemaScope, Technicolor.)

I DIED A THOUSAND TIMES (Warners) Indifferent remake of *High Sierra*, less well acted than the original and padded out with sentimental subplot about crippled girl. (Jack Palance, Shelley Winters; director, Stuart Heisler. CinemaScope, Warnercolor.)

***ILLEGAL** (Warners) Former district attorney, who has become racketeer's lawyer, redeems his reputation but loses his life. Old-style gangster story from a W. R. Burnett script, with some drive and force in the handling. (Edward G. Robinson, Nina Foch; director, Lewis Allen.)

LAND OF THE PHAROHS (Warners) Standard pre-Christian spectacle, with Jack Hawkins as obsessed pharaoh responsible for building the great pyramid. Some of Trauner's sets are impressive, but the script credit to William Faulkner merely mysterious. (Joan Collins; director, Howard Hawks. CinemaScope, WarnerColor.)

LUMIERE D'EN FACE, LA (Miracle) Sleazy French sex-drama in the *Rage au Corps* tradition, with Brigitte Bardot as a Lady Chatterley of the petrol pumps, bored with her garage proprietor husband after an accident has rendered him impotent. (Raymond Pellegrin, Roger Pigaut; director, Georges Lacombe.)

MAN WHO NEVER WAS, THE (Fox) Anglo-American production concerning a celebrated war-time Intelligence coup. Intriguing material, but treatment disappointingly pedestrian. Reviewed. (Clifton Webb, Gloria Grahame, Robert Fleming; director, Ronald Neame. CinemaScope, Eastmancolor.)

*1984 (A.B.-Pathé) Very questionable adaptation of Orwell's novel, with characters sentimentalised and leading players miscast, intellectual sting removed, and modified ending in which love triumphs over Big Brother. Reviewed. (Edmond O'Brien, Jan Sterling, Michael Redgrave; director, Michael Anderson.)

NOW AND FOREVER (A.B.-Pathé) Schoolgirl and garage proprietor's son elope to Gretna Green, pursued by police and parents. Very winsome. (Janette Scott, Vernon Gray, Kay Walsh; director, Mario Zampi. Technicolor.)

ONE MAN MUTINY (Warners) Pioneer airman, fighting for recognition of the importance of air power, is court-martialled after accusing U.S. War Department of criminal negligence. Rather flat reconstruction of 30-year-old courtroom battle. (Gary Cooper, Charles Bickford, Rod Steiger; director, Otto Preminger. CinemaScope, WarnerColor.)

***OTHELLO** (United Artists) Orson Welles' brilliant, perverse, idiosyncratic adaptation. If original text and narrative coherence are neglected, visual and dramatic invention are frequently exciting. Reviewed. (Orson Welles, Michael MacLiammoir, Suzanne Cloutier.)

***PRIVATE'S PROGRESS** (British Lion) What could have been a comic parable about an innocent's induction into the war-time army and his disillusioning experiences slips into amiable farce through reliance on the easy joke. Reviewed. (Richard Attenborough, Ian Carmichael, Dennis Price; director, John Boulting.)

*****RICHARD III** (Independent) Laurence Olivier brilliant as Shakespeare's scheming king, in a satisfyingly forthright and dynamic adaptation. (John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Claire Bloom; director, Laurence Olivier. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

***ROMEO AND JULIET** (Gala) Soviet film in Agfacolor of the ballet by Lavrovsky and Prokofiev; a fascinating, imaginatively made dance film, with some striking settings and a high level of performance. (Ulanova, Y. Jdanov; directors, Lavrovsky, Lev Arnstam.)

***ROSE TATTOO, THE** (Paramount) Adaptation of Tennessee Williams' play about Sicilian widow inconsolable after loss of truck-driver husband, but finally consoled by similar though more oafish colleague. Some telling scenes, fine performance by Magnani, but an ultimate lack of purpose. Reviewed. (Burt Lancaster, Marisa Pavan; director, Daniel Mann. VistaVision.)

***ROUGE ET LE NOIR, LE** (Films de France) Stendhal's novel elegantly but coldly adapted by Claude Autant-Lara, in shades of rose and grey. An interesting performance by Gerard Philipe; Danielle Darrieux and Antonella Lualdi ill at ease. (Eastmancolor. Print by Technicolor.)

TOWN LIKE ALICE, A (JAFID) Group of British women, taken prisoner during the war in Malaya, are trekked through the jungle by Japanese captors. Horrors over-understated; indomitable national grit much in evidence. (Virginia McKenna, Peter Finch; director, Jack Lee.)

***THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY** (Paramount) is that he is dead. Hitchcock completely at ease in a sardonic *comédie noire* of love among the corpses. Expertly scripted and played, this is Hitchcock's best for some time. (Edmund Gwenn, John Forsythe, Shirley MacLaine; Vista Vision, Technicolor.)

WHO DONE IT? (JAFID) Burlesque spy melodrama, introducing TV comedian Benny Hill. Rather episodic and slapdash; intermittently good fun. (Belinda Lee, David Kossoff; directors, Basil Dearden, Michael Relph.)

THE FRONT PAGE

A correspondent living near Hollywood sent the account of an interview that follows.

I DIDN'T know, really, what to expect. The car, turning out of the main road, passing between gateposts without a gate, drove down an unkept, pitted drive; laurel and rhododendron bushes, hopelessly intertwined, strayed across everything. In the garage I glimpsed an open Rolls, at least thirty years old but immaculate, seats upholstered in leopard skin. There was an empty swimming pool in the garden, and a rat scuttled across it. Then, as I drew up in front of the grey, Gothic-looking mansion with shutters drawn across most of the windows, the door opened. A stiffly erect, close-cropped man in white gloves whom I took to be the butler advanced slowly towards me. He said, gutturally: "Madame is expecting you."

Having made no appointment, I was mystified, but he led me authoritatively across the bare yet oppressive hall and I followed. I noticed there were no knobs or handles on any of the doors. The butler must have noticed I thought this was strange, because he whispered that Madame had been known to lock herself in her bedroom (sometimes very melancholic after viewing a film that had displeased her) and try to slash her wrists. . . . I began to wonder now if the whole thing had been a mistake. It had seemed a good idea to pay one's respects to the Tenth Muse on her sixtieth birthday, to tell her what was happening—to tell her above all about the exhibition that was to be held.

But there was no time to draw back. Madame was alerted now, she was coming towards me with short, rapid, rather menacing steps. She had bound a black toque round her head, she wore dark glasses (though it was April and twilight) and a plain black dress with a short train. Dismissing the butler with an imperious sign, she motioned me to follow her now, and I found myself in a vast, dimly lit drawing room, heavy with curtains and tapestries. I had the impression the curtains were always drawn across the windows now, there was never any daylight here.

She sat on the sofa, where the light was at its faintest, most muted, placed a cigarette in an elaborate metal holder and lit it. She didn't, I thought, look her years—not more than forty-five at first glance, though of course in this place it was difficult to be sure. . . . "Well, young man", her hoarse rasping voice cut across my thoughts. "Here I am."

There was a pause. She blew a trail of smoke across the room.

Then: "I wanted to congratulate you", I began, "on your birthday—"

"At my time of life", she broke in, twisting her lips momentarily into a smile, "one stops advertising one's birthday."

"Oh, but surely", I said. "It's being advertised everywhere, haven't you heard? Has no one told you about the exhibition?"

She gave me a quick, suspicious look, seemed to retreat further into the sofa, into the darkness. The butler returned, wheeling in champagne and sandwiches on a trolley. "Exhibition? You mean they are planning to exhibit me?"

"In London", I explained. "It's going to be a great tribute to your life. 'Sixty Years of Cinema', it's called, an exhibition sponsored by the British Film Institute and presented by *The Observer*."

I had her attention now. She sat with one long, thin hand clutching her shoulder like a spring ready to uncoil. The butler poured out champagne, she took a glass mechanically with the other hand but did not drink.

"You didn't hear", I went on, "about the exhibition in Paris a few months ago? Designs, costumes, models, scripts, all kinds of documents and contraptions, posters and stills. It was your world—it was magic."

She seemed to like this. "What sort of magic?" she inquired, in a softer voice.

"Well, everything one thinks of as you. There was a dummy Mae West in a saloon costume, and she looked right across at Stroheim's plans for the royal procession in *The Wedding March*. There was a replica of Méliès' old studio, there was a display of audience reaction postcards after a sneak preview of *You Only Live Once*, there were Charlie's pants and stick for *City Lights* and a huge photographic enlargement of Gabin and Michèle Morgan on the Havre waterfront. . . . It was your temple", I said. "It was your life."

There was another pause. Then she spoke even more softly. "Will you have another glass of champagne, young man?"

I poured it out myself, because the butler had gone. From somewhere else in the great house came the sound of someone playing Bach on a wheezy old organ. She pulled a bell rope irritably, and it stopped.

"This exhibition in London", she said. "It'll be like

the one in Paris?"

"Yes, it will be another temple. All the material's coming over, and they're getting some extra things, too."

"A temple", she repeated, and now a look of strange elation came over her face. "I like the idea of a temple—after all I've been through I think I deserve it." She laughed. "I've led them all a dance, haven't I?" she said. "The historians and the inventors and the collectors and the anthropologists and the sociologists—all trying to keep up with me, all never quite sure what I'd do next. But how could they? How could I?" She inserted another cigarette in the holder. "I was born on the wrong side of the tracks, I made no secret of that. After years of struggle I got one foot over on the right side. But that's an invidious position to be in, young man. There are still certain exclusive circles", and she looked very sardonic now, the hand clawed more deeply into her shoulder, "to which I am not admitted. They're afraid, I suppose, that like Eliza Doolittle I'll still drop a 'Not bloody likely' in the wrong place."

"But that", I said, "is just what so many people love you for."

The Muse sighed. "Ah yes, they love me. But they don't always listen to me. One day they will—they will!" Her voice rasped again now, she took off her dark glasses for a moment and I saw that her eyes narrowed. "I'll be back", she said. "I'll be back, with a message. The screens have got bigger, I'll say, but it's the pictures that have got smaller!"

I took a sandwich. The filling was caviare.

"I remember", she said, "I remember the time when I was just a train flickering into a station. When I was a tramp with a stick and a pair of baggy trousers. . . ." And at this moment she suddenly got up, produced—it seemed from nowhere—a cane and a pair of old trousers

and a false moustache which she clapped on her face, and paraded across the twilight room with a brilliant impersonation of Chaplin. Then, removing the disguise, she returned to the same position on the sofa. "When I danced in the courtyards of Babylon", she went on as if nothing had happened, "and stormed the Winter Palace, and had terrible German dreams—"

"But you cannot", I suggested daringly, "live always in the past."

The hand uncoiled. "Indeed I cannot, young man." She spoke severely. "I am working my way gradually into the present. I was going to tell you about my life here—they've been very good to me here at times—and about Italy, and Japan, and—"

"It'll all be there", I said. "In the exhibition. Won't you come and see it?"

She seemed to retreat into the sofa again. "When does it start?"

"In May."

"Well, I don't know, young man. I don't go about much now. I seldom leave this house. Although Mr. de Mille keeps on promising. . . ." She shrugged impatiently. "If I *should* arrive, you understand, it will be strictly incognito. But I was going to say", and her tone changed, became more commanding, "when you interrupted me earlier—I was going to say I had written my memoirs. I was trying to give you an idea of them."

"Indeed? How interesting", I said politely.

"You think so?" She stood up now, and I noticed that by the side of the sofa, and extending behind it, were sheaves and sheaves of papers, loosely tied together. I could make out some writing on them in a loose, flowing, almost childlike hand. "You're a writer, aren't you?" she said. "You know about these things, you can help me. I want you to . . ."

At this point, mysteriously, the text breaks off. We wrote to our correspondent, asking what happened then, but the reply came from a different man, who said he was now the tenant of the apartment. His predecessor, he added, left rather suddenly. A foreigner in white gloves, driving an old Rolls, had entered the apartment one day and merely packed up all his belongings.



Double wedding: Frank Sinatra, Vivian Blaine, Jean Simmons and Marlon Brando in Mankiewicz's version of "Guys and Dolls".

In the Picture

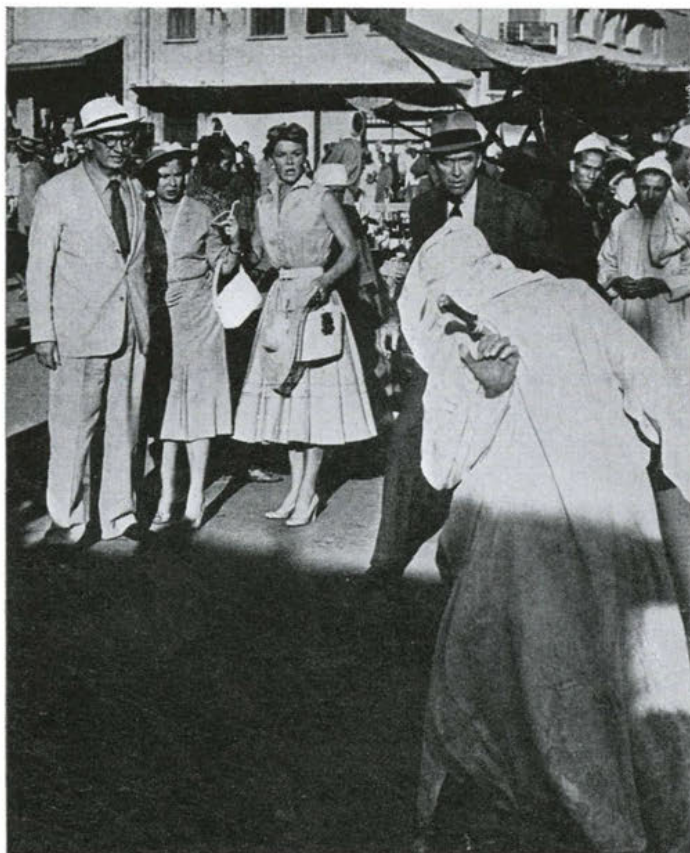
British Films

THERE have been two important developments recently in the British film industry, the agreement between Sir Michael Balcon and MGM, and the forthcoming £3,000,000 production programme announced by Mr. John Davis for the Rank Organisation.

Sir Michael Balcon's agreement with MGM for the world-wide distribution of Ealing films was concluded on his visit to America in February. Since the sale of Ealing Studios to BBC Television and the announcement that the company

would not in future be associated with the Rank Organisation, its future had appeared uncertain. Now, with MGM providing most of the finance and ensuring distribution, the company will produce from three to five films yearly at the Elstree studios. Immediate projects include *The Shiralee*, an Australian story by D'Arcy Niland, *Man in the Sky*, a drama about a test pilot by William Rose, to be directed by Charles Crichton, *The Story of Dunkirk*, with a script by R. C. Sheriff, and another original subject by William Rose. Kenneth Tynan, dramatic critic of *The Observer*, has been appointed adviser to the company's script department.

The Rank Organisation will produce twenty films by the end of 1956, sixteen of them in colour and VistaVision. This represents, of course, a considerable expansion, and establishes an output far exceeding that of any other company in Britain. Forthcoming productions include *The Spanish Gardener*, from A. J. Cronin's novel, produced by John Bryan and directed by Philip Leacock, with Dirk Bogarde; *The Secret Place*, produced by John Bryan, which promotes Clive Donner, well known as an editor (*Genevieve*, *I am a Camera*, etc.) to director; *The Magnificent Leonardi*, a thriller about mind-readers, directed by Brian Desmond Hurst, with Peter Finch; *Ill Met by Moonlight*, an adaptation by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger of W. Stanley Moss's story



"The Man Who Knew Too Much": Bernard Miles, Brenda de Banzie, Doris Day and James Stewart in a scene from Hitchcock's new version of his celebrated thriller.

about the kidnapping of a German general during the war in Crete; *Doctor at Large* and a new Norman Wisdom comedy, *Up in the World*.

This increased production programme coincides with a new drive on overseas distribution markets. The company will open offices in South America this year, which means that it will have established its own distribution organisation in all parts of the world except the U.S.A.

The Arrest

Spain having been chosen as the country for this issue's "New Names" feature (see page 212), the material on Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis Berlanga having been received, and an introductory note stressing the suppressive role of censorship in Spanish production written, by an odd coincidence the news of Bardem's arrest followed on the next day.

In the middle of shooting his new film, *Calle Major* (*Main Street*), starring Betsy Blair, Bardem was removed to prison by the Spanish secret police on orders from the Minister of the Interior. The policemen entered his hotel in the early morning, disguised as extras. No charges were preferred. Even the news was scantily reported—no mention of it was made in the British press—though in France it aroused some quick and distinguished indignation. Leading film-makers and writers, from Clair to Bresson, from Mauriac to Sartre, from Cocteau to Clouzot, signed a protest published in *L'Express* and *Les Lettres Françaises*. The producer of the film attempted at once to impose another director, but Betsy Blair refused to work with him.

The sequel was curious. Bardem remained in prison for a fortnight from February 12th, with no charges forthcoming. His last film, *Death of a Cyclist*, had been heavily criticised in the Falangist press a few months earlier, and a student riot had preceded the director's arrest; the incident was clearly a symbol of increased tensions within the country, and Bardem, already known as a critic of censorship, was regarded by the young intelligentsia as a kind of spokesman. But other factors, it seems, finally determined the outcome. *Calle Major* was a French-Spanish co-production, made under a trade agreement between the industries of the two

countries, sponsored at government level. At the time of Bardem's arrest, the agreement was due for ratification for another year, and a Spanish delegation was *en route* for Paris to negotiate this. One does not know what hints were passed or dropped—but, the day before the official meeting was to take place, Bardem was released. There was no explanation.

The co-production agreement has now been renewed. Bardem is shooting *Calle Major* again. Everything else apart, it is good, for once in a while, to be able to say something in favour of co-productions. . . .

Press Conference

JOHN CUTTS writes: "If Mister Ford says that's what he's going to do, then I'll want to do it with him," John Wayne (in London for a Press reception before he attended the premiere of *The Conqueror*) answered, when I asked him if he knew anything about the rumour that John Ford's next film would be *Valley Forge*, a story of the War of Independence, with Wayne playing George Washington. Then a lady journalist inquired: "Do you intend doing any horseback riding whilst here?" "Only if they pay me," he said. In between this kind of thing, he seemed pleased to answer my questions about himself and Ford. He very rarely used Ford's Christian name, it was always Mister Ford or Coach, occasionally Jack.

His favourite parts? "Hell, that's easy. Brittles in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, and also *The Quiet Man*." Reasons? "Well, *The Quiet Man* was a honey of a film to make, we believed in it, that makes it easy to do. As for *Yellow Ribbon*, Brittles was a great part, it was deep, you know, kind of complex. Besides, Mister Ford put a lot into it, boy, he worked me hard on that one." Wayne's ambition is to direct. He has a script ready, which he is very keen to do, called *The Alamo*. He would like to film it in Mexico. I mentioned that the siege of the Alamo had recently been used in two films, *Davy Crockett* and *The Last Command*. "Davy Crockett," he said, "Well, that's for the kids, and Herbert Yates put too much politics in *The Last Command*."

On the subject of directing, he confirmed the story that he himself had directed certain scenes in *The Quiet Man* while Ford was ill. "I helped out," said Wayne, "I shot the horse race over the sands for Maureen O'Hara's bonnet, and I helped a great deal on the boxing flashback scene. Boy, was I worried until Coach gave me the O.K. on them."

Someone asked: "Is it true that you are a friend of Senator Joe McCarthy?" "Yes," he said, "And I always will be. He's a great man but he's misunderstood." I asked him about *The Searchers*, the film Ford made last summer, based on the novel by Alan le May. "Oh, I'm real mean in that one, real mean. Mister Ford is very pleased with the film, you'll see it in the fall, I'm told." Telling him about the recent Ford season at the National Film Theatre, I mentioned that in an early film, *Men Without Women*, I thought I had glimpsed Wayne in a bit part. "You did, too. I was working on the props for that picture. Coach gave me a single line to do, 'Lift the anchor!' or something like that, and told me to go ahead and do my damndest, which I did."

Ford had been a great help on some of Wayne's personally produced films, helping with some complicated cutting problems on *Bullfighter and the Lady*, giving a hand with the direction of *Hondo*. Wayne's company, Batjac, releasing through Warner Brothers, have ceased production in spite of being financially very successful. Wayne would not give me any further information about this. A columnist asked: "What do you do to keep fit, Mr. Wayne?" I moved to the bar. . . .

Doublethink

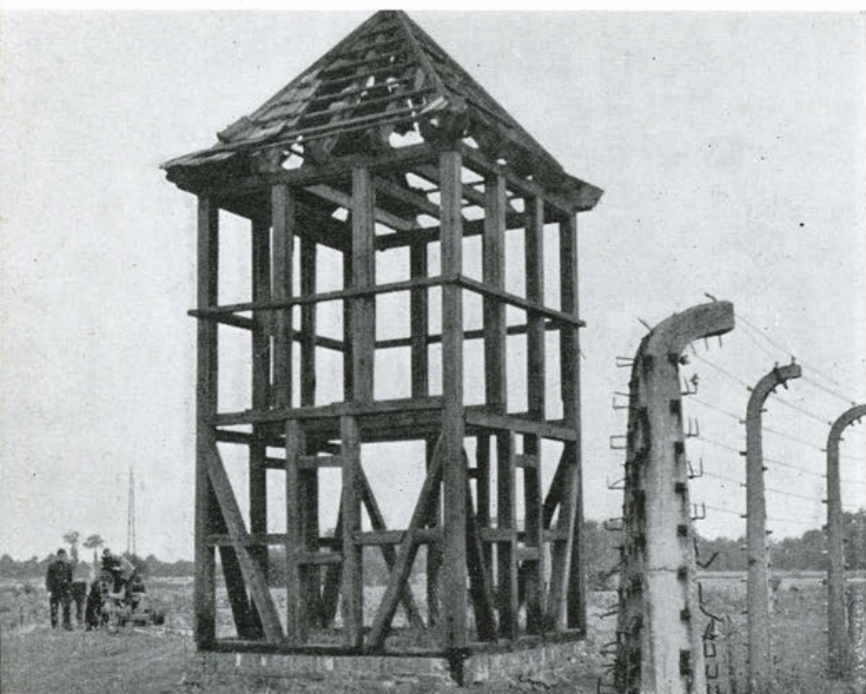
The revised ending of the screen's 1984—Winston Smith, after brainwashing, shouts a final defiance of Big Brother before being shot down by the Thought Police—brings Orwell's savage intellectual masterpiece decisively into line with conventional screen morality. Love, once again, must conquer all. According to a *Daily Mail* report, Mr. Peter Rathvon, the film's American producer, has defended this cheap and gratuitous piece of bowdlerising in terms almost worthy of Newspeak: "Our [ending] is more logical. Orwell showed the human soul destroyed by brainwashing. Our version shows this is not always so. It is the type of ending Orwell might have written if he had not known when he wrote the book that he was dying." Mr. Rathvon's logical interpretation of what Orwell might have written is being shown in this country. The *Daily Mail* report, however, states that "the film with the happier ending will be shown only in Britain. . . . Columbia, the U.S. company who will handle the film outside



KINDER, MUTTER UND EIN GENERAL

Laslo Benedek, director of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Wild One*, recently made this story in Germany for Eric Pommer, about the last weeks of World War II when young German boys (of whom one is seen above) in an ecstasy of adolescent patriotism were being recruited into the Nazi army. Their experiences are contrasted with those of their mothers, three of whom are played by Therese Ghiese, Hilde Krahl and Ursula Herking, a cabaret star in her first dramatic role (*l. to r. below*).





"Nuit et Brouillard": shooting at Auschwitz.

Britain, asked for the Orwell ending." What kind of a people, as *The Times* so correctly asks in its leader on the film, do they think we are?

"Nuit et Brouillard"

LOUIS MARCORELLES writes: Alain Resnais is a young French director of short films whose moral fervour and stylistic refinement equals that of Robert Bresson in the feature film. There are four important landmarks in his career: *Van Gogh* (which won an Oscar in 1950) and *Guernica*, dramatic impressions of famous painters through their work; *Les Statues Meurent Aussi*, an account of the gradual degradation of negro art through contact with white "civilisation"; and now *Nuit et Brouillard*. These last two films won the Prix Vigo for 1954 and 1955 respectively.

Nuit et Brouillard was commissioned by the "Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale" to mark the tenth anniversary of the liberation of the German concentration camps by the Allied forces. Resnais chose the title himself, a translation of *Nacht und Nebel*, a phrase by which the authorities in the Nazi camps designated new prisoners due for extermination within three months of their arrival. Often the initials "N.N." were stencilled on future victims. And the title evokes the mood of the film: a kind of voyage to the end of the concentration camp night, in the form of a meditation, calm, considered, unhysterical and unrheterical.

Alain Resnais builds up his film on a counterpoint of present and past; the horrors of yesterday, shown in black and white, through documents, films and photographs found in German, Polish and French archives, and the return to peace today, shot in colour, at what remains of Auschwitz. The opening images are of springtime; nature itself seems to encourage forgetfulness; and then, suddenly, the camera swoops down to the barbed wire. . . . We enter the dead abandoned setting of what—only ten years ago—was man's most rational enterprise for exterminating man. So the past becomes the conscience of the present, its tormenting question-mark, and the spectator has to ask himself—how was this possible?

The director never allows himself a facile exploitation of the spectator's nerves. If, at the end, we see some of those terrible images again, those images which stupefied the world in the spring of 1945, it is because we cannot, after all, simply forget their cruelty, their malign revelation. One's first reaction, indeed, in seeing them once more, as Resnais so discreetly presents them, is of incredulity, of being confronted by a surrealist nightmare. Then nausea comes, as one is torn between the objective reality of what is shown and its unavoidable moral implications. Before coming to his "climax" (if one may call it that) of chillingly calculated horror, Resnais gives a clinical, detailed description of the workings of this camp of death, constantly interposing the present with the

past. A long tracking shot leads us through what remains of the crematorial ovens today; they look like immense bakers' ovens. Then, juxtaposed with photographs of innocent victims taken at the time by their Nazi executioners, the cruelty becomes even more absolute.

The rhythm of the film is very slow: tranquil, one might almost say. It matches the meditative quality given to even the most atrocious images by Jean Cayrol's admirable commentary. Cayrol, poet and novelist, was himself deported to Germany; his commentary has a fine poetic intensity, gives an extra edge to the already knife-sharp images. One thinks of E. M. Forster's words for Jennings' *Diary for Timothy*; there is a similarly close association here, although this time on an exclusively tragic level. This kind of success is rare enough—but Alain Resnais has achieved it before, with the Eluard poem read by Maria Casarès for *Guernica*.

Nuit et Brouillard should not be confined to specialised distribution; the evidence it carries should be brought to the publics of the world. Not its least original merit is to pose the fundamental dilemma: "Then who is responsible, if not ourselves?" Which is to say, the Nazi in ourselves. . . .

Film Society Conference

The first national conference of the Federation of Film Societies will be held in London on May 26th and 27th. Its general theme is "The Film Society and the Future", and its aim to evoke some practical planning for creative work in the cause of good films. The Conference will open with a discussion on the approach to giving sixteen-to-eighteen-year-olds—the future leaders of the film society movement—a deeper knowledge of film art and history. Later, the Federation will put forward a number of proposals for extending the work of film societies, and will discuss the expansion of the work of the National Film Theatre and the National Film Archive as it affects this; at an international session, delegates from other countries will speak, and also show some films. The international scope of the movement will be stressed again with Jean Grémillon presenting his latest film *l'Amour d'une Femme*, and a discussion on film criticism.



"Nuit et Brouillard": Alain Resnais (right) and his first assistant, A. Heinrich.

Gavin Lambert

FREE CINEMA



"Together".

"I want so much that we should create a life in common, a new spirit, a spirit of unanimity between a few of us who are desirous in spirit, that we should add our lives together, to make one tree, each of us free and producing in his separate fashion, but all of us together forming one spring, a unanimous blossoming. It needs that we be one in spirit, that is all."—D. H. Lawrence, letter to Katherine Mansfield, 1915.

THE makers of the three films, *Together* (directed by Lorenza Mazzetti from a story by Denis Horne), *O Dreamland* (by Lindsay Anderson) and *Momma Don't Allow* (by Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson), that formed such an exciting programme at the National Film Theatre in February, disclaimed in a programme note the specific idea of a "movement"—the films came together, were shown together, that is to say, by chance. When they came together, their creators felt they had an "attitude in common" and the programme was christened Free Cinema. In fact, the common attitude and the "new spirit" are less fortuitous than the programme note suggests; of course each film has its own

distinct personality, each was separately and independently conceived (and *O Dreamland* was made more than a year before the other two); but it is not fortuitous that the same names appear on the credits of each—Walter Lassally photographed *Momma Don't Allow* and did some additional photography for *Together*, John Fletcher was cameraman and assistant on *O Dreamland*, editor and recordist for the other two films, Lindsay Anderson was supervising editor for *Together*. Until one saw the films in the same programme, it was obviously impossible to realise how they might complement and illuminate each other; but, before this, it was clear that people "desirous in spirit" were working together, by a combination of accident and design.

The parallel with Lawrence is perhaps important, because his idea of a movement sprang from non-conformism, from impatience with convention, sadness about urban life, a sense of isolation from the main social and artistic developments of his time, the mechanisation of life around him, and a desire to regain contact with a more vital, individual force: with what he called the "freedom of the soul", with what



"Together": the deaf-mutes in their room. Michael Andrews, Eduardo Paolozzi.

the makers of Free Cinema call "a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and in the significance of the everyday". Beneath these three films lie aspirations and discontents very similar.

In the cinema today, particularly in this country, such beliefs, such criticisms, are not easy to express. But it is no exaggeration to say that, without them, no cinema can live. Thus *Together*, *O Dreamland* and *Momma Don't Allow* are important not only in themselves but for the challenge they represent.

II

In the broadest sense, *Together* and *O Dreamland* are films of protest; they are not conceived in the sweeping terms of, say, *L'Age d'Or*, but the camera-eye they turn on society—"society" is really too big and anonymous a word, it is better to say "life now"—is disenchanted, sad, occasionally ferocious and bitter. Watching Lindsay Anderson's account of the English sampling pleasures at a seaside funfair, or Lorenza Mazzetti's story of two deaf-mutes imprisoned in silence, loneliness and misunderstanding in the drab, strange streets and rooms of London's East End, one realises that the "significance of the everyday" does not include the discovery of the secret of happiness. If compassion is explicit in Lorenza Mazzetti's film, implicit in Lindsay Anderson's, it is the most rigorous, difficult and austere kind of compassion: not for the moment or the particular situation, but a kind of permanent temperamental heartache for the world and the people apparently lost in it. The child watching "Torture Through the Ages", the shabby bulky women obsessed with their mechanical gambling, the family gaping at caged animals shrinking in their squalid little zoo, seem as lost, as helpless, as fettered as the deaf-mutes mocked by a band of children on their morning walk across the bombsite, enduring mealtimes under the impatient, affronted supervision of their landlady.

In *Momma Don't Allow*, it is true, there is a kind of happiness. Into the Wood Green Jazz Club—a hired room in a London pub—come the young typists, students, butcher-boys, dentist's assistants, shop-girls, to dance to the Chris Barber band. As they improvise their own movements to the music, now rapt and slow, now swift and intricate, they move into another, an imagined world. For an evening they are free. But that is all; the return is the point of departure, the obscure indifferent everyday, of which the few opening glimpses appear sadly insignificant. Perhaps that is the significance of their escape. . . .

No doubt of it, this is the world in which we live. In

seizing upon these aspects—the anonymity of urban life, the aimless lonely figures swallowed up in the greater loneliness of the crowd, the pleasures hideous and mechanical or imaginatively aspiring—these film-makers compel above all the shock of recognition. How is it these images, so redolent of the times, have hardly appeared on our screen before? Trying to remember, fragmentary glimpses recur: the films of Jennings, the service dance in *Listen to Britain* and the riverside funeral in *Fires Were Started*, but the climate of life was different then, and in a time of war, of collective effort, an atmosphere of purpose and definite meaning enveloped these solitary pleasures and tragedies. One remembers the candid camera interviews with slum-dwellers in *Housing Problems*, and here again there was social purpose, propagandist fervour, the prospects of clearance and new homes. Now there is no war; no peace to look forward to; many of these people are living in better, newer homes. And it is still sad. Isolation of the individual, isolation of the crowd, isolation of escape—this is what one senses behind the Free Cinema programme, is why perhaps the films most strongly complement each other. "This is the world," the makers quote Dylan Thomas. "Have faith. . . ."

III

"This is the world. . . ." In *Together*, some bleak East End backgrounds succeed the credit titles, then two deaf-mutes walk across a bombsite, followed by children who torment them with innocent cruelty. They are young, one is slender, open, friendly, with tousled hair and a ready, embracing smile; the other thickset, brooding, withdrawn, a little older. This walk, and the grimacing children, sets the pattern of their days. They work in the docks; they share a room in a lodging house, the landlady sharp and mistrustful, her husband ineffectually good-natured; they go to a pub, watch the juke-box fed, the people singing and dancing to music they cannot hear; sometimes there are tensions between them—one wants to go out for the evening, the other is tired, depressed, huddles on his bed. The younger one sees a dancer in a fairground, meets her in the pub, and has a dream that night of loving and being loved. As he wakes up in the morning his friend is pouring cold water from a jug into the washbasin. . . . When the younger one dies—accidentally pushed by one of the children into the river, as he leans over the bridge, staring at the water—no one takes any notice. (Will the other ever discover what happened?) The river flows on, the dredgers roar, a barge passes; someone has died—and this too is part of the significant obscurity of everyday.

Together is a poet's film. Its method is secret, intuitive, visionary; dispensing with explicit narrative structure, it falls into a series of episodes, deliberately unemphatic, deliberately avoiding the dramatic climax. Things are repeated—the walking around, the children's savage games, the visits to the pub, the meals in the lodging house, the going to sleep and getting up in the little tunnel of a room. The flow of the film is the flow of these two lives, isolated and joined together. A little episode, buying shoelaces in the market, breaks the routine for a moment; a greater one, seeing the girl in the fairground, disturbs it with dreams. The East End backgrounds, the grey riverside, the derelict open spaces where bombs fell, the crowds at the market and, more raffish and fantastic, in the pubs, the slanting cobbled streets and high tenement buildings, are in a sense realistic—shot on location, simply lit and composed—yet the total impression is not quite real. The melancholy of the film has seeped into them and has subtly dyed their appearance. In themselves the images may be desolate, yet their real, inner desolation comes from the director, from the scenes to which they are inanimate witnesses. So an image in itself very ordinary, the barge passing along the Thames at the end, carries tragedy with it: a symbol of time, indifference

and oblivion that seems unforced and deeply sad.

From this penetration of the ordinary *Together* derives its interior power. Unobtrusively yet relentlessly, the slow rhythm of the film catches the mood of the two lives and their surroundings, as each begins to counterpoint the other. The method is an extension of Zavattini's; *Together* undramatises life, so to speak, even more severely than *Umberto D.* Not that it is unselective—on the contrary, it merely rejects what most story-tellers in this instance would select, and selects what they would reject. The result is like walking around in a strange place and letting things happen to you—there is no preparation and no explanation. Such is the life to which the two deaf-mutes are condemned. And its meaning? The real vision, perhaps, is of the extraordinary seen through the ordinary. Hence the perplexity of the clergyman on the TV programme in which the film was discussed, and the incensed viewers who wrote that the film was an insult to deaf-mutes and the makers should have their ears cut off; for *Together* is not about how deaf-mutes live in the East End of London now. It is a film of two worlds—the one that we see, and the one that the deaf-mutes symbolically project in an almost Kafka-like fashion, a world of anxiety, helplessness and solitude.

The problem raised by the film's method is of sustaining an inner development with so little outside help. In *Umberto D.* there were scenes (the landlady and her musical evenings) that seemed too conventionally dramatised in comparison with the rest. In *Together* there is, in the last twenty minutes, a slackening of inner tension. (Perhaps too it was a mistake to let the child be responsible for the death; it might have been more tragic if the accident had been pure, unmotivated, a completely impersonal affair with no visible human agency.) Here, in fact, by pushing Zavattini's method to its limits,

the film exposes them; there is a point at which the everyday, the "human moment", needs perspective if it is to retain meaning; there is a line beyond which repetition becomes merely repetitious and dulls itself. *Together* occasionally crosses it. Nor, incidentally, has the soundtrack, an often exciting, evocative blend of music and effects, the same sustained singleness of purpose as the images. Its inconsistencies (sometimes natural sounds are recorded, sometimes not) are clearly designed to match the non-reality of the film as a whole, but are occasionally disconcerting.

These reservations do not effect the essential quality of the film, its daring conception and personal style, its strange, intense and delicate mood reinforced by the telling uniformity of style imposed on the non-professional players (Michael Andrews and Eduardo Paolozzi, painter and sculptor respectively, giving an astonishing truth to their roles), and the quiet, melodic lines of Daniele Paris's music.

IV

The method of *O Dreamland*, shot on 16 mm. by Lindsay Anderson in 1953, is the reverse. The first time, it is like a blow in the face; the second, one approaches it with a kind of eager dread. For ten minutes it assaults eye and ear with a rough-edged but sharp-centred impression of this South Coast amusement park, in which the ugliness and degradation of most of the distractions offered are symbolised by the mocking mechanical laughter of a dummy sailor. There is a working model of the execution of the "atom spies", the Rosenbergs, which reconstructs the ritual for sixpence at the door; equally, a hanging may be viewed as often as someone cares to put a penny in the slot, and a lifesize Joan of Arc, looking something like the heroine of a touring pantomime twenty years ago, is burnt at the stake;

"Mamma Don't Allow".





"O Dreamland". Spectators.

while "Torture Through the Ages" dramatises the ordeals of boiling oil, thumbscrews, etc. Yet, whether the rendezvous is with violent death or a smutty peepshow, with a fire-eater or a gambling machine, a listless caged animal or an old mug of tea, reactions appear the same. People stare—a child blinks suddenly, an enormous woman creaks forward to reveal one stocking rolled below the knee, a family stands to watch the firebrand entering the mouth as if waiting for a bus, and even the gaunt women at the gambling tables are like a factory line, mechanically engrossed in routine. Signs of real vitality are produced by greed—the man watching the crane, as it nearly scoops a trinket, with an expression of rigid lust—by the juke-box music of Frankie Laine and Muriel Smith to which the girls giggle, sway, get hep, link arms in cowboy hats, and by the thrill of physical motion—the great aerial contraptions that look like spaceships, shooting diagonally up and down past each other and provoking laughter, mock-terror and a feverish elation.

Everything is ugly. A *papier-mâché* facade with a swollen, grimacing gargoyle, an immense "artistic" statue representing a coyly nude pseudo-classical figure, a "Swiss beer garden" in which local music and yodelling emanate from twitching, squeaking puppets, the steaming, slippery, greasy trays of food labelled SAUSAGES and ONIONS in the Happy Family Restaurant; feet shuffle clumsily across ground fouled with all kinds of litter, buttocks encased in grey, shapeless material spread and crease over stools at counters; and all the time the sleek charabancs pour in. It is almost too much. The nightmare is redeemed by the point of view, which, for all the unsparing candid camerawork and the harsh, inelegant photography, is emphatically humane. Pity, sadness, even poetry is infused into this drearily tawdry, aimlessly hungry world. It is infused by imaginative comment—the counterpoint of sound and image, with Frankie Laine's passionately emetic "I Believe" blaring over the shot of the imprisoned lion pacing its cage like a creature in an endless dream, with the drawling cry of Muriel Smith's "Kiss me—Thrill me" rhythmically matching the spaceships as they cross in mid-air—but even more by the director's absolute fidelity to his subject.

The unexpected image tells. A haggard, elderly woman in a salad-bowl hat calmly, almost fatalistically drinks her tea; a plump, derisive one points at the "artistic" statue and staggers with laughter; a derelict little row of tramps and nomads chew their lunchtime sandwiches; the trio of girls lights up with ecstatic vivacity as the juke-box plays their favourite tune—and protest at this anonymous, bedraggled search for happiness turns into compassion, into love. All

these people, one realises, are seeking something they will probably never find. The Rosenbergs die again and they bleakly, willingly stare—but there is nothing perverse about it, only a kind of uncertain passivity, an oppressive, sometimes intolerable sense of loss and deprivation. The pleasures are sad not because they are ugly but because there is nothing else. Where else should they go? At the end, the camera moves swiftly, vertiginously up to a panoramic view of Dreamland twinkling and blaring in the night—and it is like a plea for release.

In *Momma Don't Allow* there is the suggestion of a more real escape. The film celebrates a piece of urban folklore in the making. The movements created by the young dancers are often surprisingly complex and beautiful; evolving out of the music, of the mood as it comes and goes, they also suggest a curious abstraction from life. Costume plays a minor part—there is a youth with the Teddy Boy hairstyle and velvet-collared suit, a girl with a bold treble clef patterned on her white sweater—and at times the couples seem wholly remote from each other, each dancer preoccupied with his own movements, creating his own vacuum, occasionally, as if by chance, coming together for a moment with his partner; at other times an instinctive *rapprochement* apparently exists between a couple, and the excitement, the rhythmic responses, are shared. Compared with country folklore (the astonishing Cornish dance recorded by Alan Lomax in his film *Oss Oss Wee Oss*, for instance, with its festive costumes, mythological props and sexual tensions), the result is finally rather bleak. Partly this comes from the film's refusal to over-dramatise its material—this jazz club is not on the sex, violence and marijuana fringe, but more like a specialised community centre. Partly, though, it comes from a lack of definition in the makers' attitude.

Momma Don't Allow begins with a sequence showing the jazz enthusiasts arriving at the club for an after-work evening; the intention, evidently, is to evoke and illuminate their everyday backgrounds. Pleasantly observed as the shots are, however, they are not particularly revealing, and the contrast between the dancers' ordinary, obligatory world and the world of their imagination never emerges very sharply. For all its attractive skill, its sympathetic and unforced presentation of people—no doubt this is the first time in a British film that Teddy Boys and shop-girls are allowed to be themselves, undistorted by a patronising or melodramatic approach—the film is not quite a personal statement. It wants to do more than record, but when it sets out to interpret (as in the prologue, the little episode of misunderstanding between one couple, the satirically treated arrival of the "slumming" rich), it seems hampered by a note of reservation, it becomes almost commonplace.

The jazz club, whether its emotional level be feverish or relaxed, is a contemporary symbol. What one looks for in *Momma Don't Allow* is a clue to the symbol. "It is the freedom, exuberance and vitality of this world that we set out to capture and to admire," its makers say in a programme note. Yet how free and exuberant in this context, one wonders, is it? Placed against the true folk dance, with its wealth of reference to inherited custom and mythology, its symbolic display, the self-expression here seems fairly limited. Folk dance is an affirmation of character—people reveal themselves in it, make an imaginative comment on their lives, part conscious, part unconscious. Here no such revelation is made; the dancing just happens, people are the same at the beginning and the end. Perhaps, if the prologue had been more penetrating, and complemented by an epilogue showing the dancers going home again, returning to their everyday lives, a real perspective would have been gained. As it is, the surface detail is nearly always very good, there is a freshness and affection about it that is genuinely personal, but the final impression is of an activity too isolated, too unrelated to the life from which it springs.

V

The immediate genesis of these films is easily explained. *O Dreamland* was shot by Lindsay Anderson, for a total cost of less than £100, with privately raised funds, after the making of *Thursday's Children*. *Momma Don't Allow* and *Together* were sponsored by the British Film Institute's Experimental Production Fund. The other films financed entirely or in part by the Fund are, however, different; they form an original and eclectic group (notably the vivacious Anthony Gross-Hector Hoppin cartoon of *Round the World in Eighty Days* and the technical experiment of *The Door in the Wall*), but they are not "engaged."

Thus *Together*, *Momma Don't Allow* and *O Dreamland* stand out sharply on their own, as the first signs for some time of a fundamentally progressive, personal approach to exploring contemporary life in this country through the cinema. Except for the documentary movement founded by Grierson, the *avant-garde* in British films has been a series of isolated achievements, not a movement forged by solidarities; and even in the documentaries of the 30's there were two diverging streams—the urgent, propagandist actuality of *Housing Problems* and *Children at School*, the more formal experiments of *Coalface* and *Nightmail*. It is the first group that seems most vital today, together with the films of Humphrey Jennings, that extraordinary, tender and socially acute poet who, through his own original vision, effectively fused both approaches, combining a passionate interpretation of actuality with his own genius for formal expression. Otherwise, it is a question of individual films—the genuine frivolity and inventive exuberance of Asquith's *Shooting Stars*, the cynical, uneasy world of melodrama evoked by Hitchcock in the late 20's and 30's, the separate essays in the comedy of manners (in which the English can display such a perverse, fantastic brilliance), *Major Barbara*, *On Approval*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, and Olivier's experiments with Shakespeare. The most striking factor in all these cases was the revelation of temperament, of unmistakable personal attitude. All these films illuminated; many others have recorded, more or less skilfully, more or less shrewdly, but without the passion of the true poet, the true interpreter, the true satirist, that alone can create a work of art. Our cinema has suffered intermittently since birth from two weaknesses—lack of concern with vital contemporary issues and a consequent isolation from many important factors of national life, and a tendency to confuse half-art with real art. The second is the outcome of the first. However brilliant the trappings, the stylistic effects, the incidental observation, if the world itself is too narrow and enclosed, the result will be, in the long run, thin and impermanent.

No doubt the lack of imaginative concern with the real, the changing world here made the revelation of the postwar Italian cinema even more powerful. Already, more than four years ago, Paul Dickson's *David* showed its influence and built its own cornerstone, using a "real" person to create a central portrait of compassion and authority, and humanising its "real" locations in a way that only Jennings had done before. It was, sadly, a film without issue—for itself and its maker. Or so, for some time, it seemed; because, in the perspective of Free Cinema, it also takes its place as a characteristic work of the younger generation.

The films make it clear that the argument that the English can never be "natural" actors is a myth. Fewer of them are, no doubt, than the Italians or the French, than the Americans probably. There are stronger barriers of reserve to be broken down. But, in their separate ways, the figure of *David*, the jazz enthusiasts of *Momma Don't Allow*, the amateur players of *Together* (drawn from widely contrasting social and professional levels), to say nothing of the children in *Thursday's Children*, expose the myth. And *O Dreamland*, of course, suggests rich possibilities for the candid camera



"O Dreamland". Spectacle.

style—one can imagine equivalent films of mass observation on, say, a holiday camp, or the Derby, or a day-trip to France. . . . Here, at any rate, are "real" people in dramatised situations, conveying their own truth and illustrating human behaviour in a way that, it is no exaggeration to say, has never (Jennings excepted) appeared before on the British screen.

The films also penetrate a *milieu*. How completely or fully they succeed is less important than the fact that they bring so much; where has one seen this strange, sad, elusive yet tangible East End of *Together* before? Or the phenomenon of *Dreamland*? Or Teddy-Boys and shop-girls simply, unconcernedly enjoying their own pleasures?

The films were made with small units, outside the studio, and their total cost—as has been widely remarked—is less than that of a single newsreel. *O Dreamland* was made by two people; *Momma Don't Allow* by its two directors, its cameraman and sound recordist, and four voluntary assistants; *Together*, on 35 mm., by a unit of three with occasional voluntary help. The cinema is still much less costly than its accumulated apparatus suggests, and if everyone who worked on these films had been paid at normal rates their budgets would still have been remarkably low. Without the British Film Institute Fund, of course, it is doubtful whether the last two would have been made at all—but the important fact is that they *have* been, and the lesson is there.

At present, distribution policies and A.C.T. regulations do not favour this kind of activity, but the necessity for experiment must be realised if a tradition of vital film-making is to exist in this country, and, with it, the necessity for a more flexible, imaginative apparatus of production. This is not to suggest that any company should deliberately embark on a programme of films *à l'italienne*—but that the financing and distribution of a few should be considered. With the talent revealed by Free Cinema it is an obvious practical outlet for someone willing to take a chance; acceptance of the method by the professional cinema here would be a gesture of self-enrichment. The intense interest shown by the audiences at the National Film Theatre in the programme indicated, too, that what the films have to offer is meaningful, urgent—it was part of the whole experience to see them under these circumstances. Somehow, recognition was in the air; in this discovery of new aspects of contemporary life, method and intention seemed inseparable. That is the important, the necessary, point of departure.

REBELS WITHOUT CAUSES



"Blackboard Jungle". Teacher (Glenn Ford) and rebel (Vic Morrow).

by Penelope Houston

SEVERELY hit by the tornado of McCarthyism, Hollywood, that vulnerable and cautious community, has been some time in recovering its nerve, in regaining the degree of social awareness that characterised the American cinema of a few years ago. Predictably, the route back to controversy was first clearly signposted at the box-office: whatever Terry Malloy's pain-wracked walk in the last sequence of *On the Waterfront* proved, it forcefully indicated that social comment, sufficiently laced with violence, had drawing power. The lesson has been learnt. The hazards of life as an American are again being explored, with a ferocity which drew from the British film press—after a single day's viewing had exposed them to *Trial*, *The Man With the Golden Arm* and *The Desperate Hours*—expressions of agitated disbelief. *Trial* criticised, although cautiously, the McCarthyist procedure of inquisition by committee. Another politically controversial issue, the book-burning aspect of the witch hunt, can be hazarded now that the dust has cleared: *The*

Library, initially announced as a subject for a comeback by Mary Pickford, then shelved for several years, is finally being made, under the new title of *Storm Centre*, with Bette Davis.

This escape from the over-cautious film-making of the past few years, however satisfactory in itself, is not resulting in pictures comparable with the attacking social melodramas of the 'thirties, nor even with those defiant animated tracts which more recently asserted the rights of America's racial minorities. In the 'thirties, social protest was the reverse side of the coin: the positive optimism of the New Deal was simultaneously finding its expression in the Capra comedies; comments on the malaise of the Depression years filtered through to light comedy (*My Man Godfrey*) and to the musical (*Hallelujah, I'm a Bum*, *Gold Diggers of 1933*).

At present, social protest is liable to appear rather as an end in itself, an attitude adopted with a certain degree of conscious calculation. Gangsterism has ceased to be a valid

contemporary issue and the cinema must look elsewhere for its ration of violence—to delinquency, race riots, police corruption or political strong-arm tactics. Pictures such as *Riot in Cell Block 11*, with its strong current of genuinely felt anger, or *The Wild One*, with its cool analysis of the forces working towards violence, honourably illuminate the problems they discuss. More often, the targets are set up, the guns blaze away, and one is left increasingly to wonder whether they are loaded with real ammunition, whether the whole show is more than an elaborate game of mock warfare.

What, in fact, are the targets chosen by the socially critical film-maker? Poverty no longer appears as a live issue, and it is the hardships of life as a tycoon that (in *Executive Suite* and *Woman's World*) come in for sympathetic consideration. Racial tensions and juvenile crime are horses not yet so near death that they cannot stand another flogging. Fundamentally, though, criticism seems to be directed less at specific abuses than at the forms of society itself, the institutions through which a community coheres and protects itself. Analyse the content of some recent films, and you have the impression that it is authority, in a variety of aspects, that is coming under fire:—

THE COURTS: In *Trial*, a murder case becomes a major issue in local politics, the weakness of the court before a potentially hostile public opinion is implied, and law officers are shown working to secure a rigged jury panel. *Phenix City Story* shows the breakdown of judicial procedure in a Southern State, where another jury blandly disregards incontrovertible evidence against a murderer.

THE POLICE: *The Desperate Hours* assumes that a man whose house has been invaded by gangsters dare not risk informing the police for fear of the inevitable shooting match, and introduces a sheriff prepared to risk innocent lives on the chance of a spectacular coup that will tell in his favour at election time. In *Phenix City Story*, a corrupt police force remains wholly inactive in a town controlled by racketeers. In *The Wild One*, weakness on the part of a police officer makes possible an outbreak of rioting. *Rogue Cop*, *Pushover* and *Shield for Murder* are all thrillers in which the central character is a crooked cop.

THE SCHOOL: *Blackboard Jungle* attacks conditions in a New York trade school, suggesting that the staff react with apathetic defeatism to the hooliganism of their pupils. In *Rebel Without a Cause*, criticism is implied rather than stated, with a devastating comment on juvenile gangsterism in an ordinary high school.

THE FAMILY: The possessive wife, often placated and respected (cf. June Allyson in *Strategic Air Command* or *Tiger in the Sky*) is ferociously attacked in *The Shrike*. *Rebel Without a Cause*, completing what *The Shrike* began with a savage picture of relations between cowed husband and domineering wife, further indicts domestic tensions as a major cause of juvenile delinquency.

Although all, or most, of these situations could be more or less duplicated in earlier films, the impression when they are reviewed *en bloc* is of some change of direction in the American social film. Self-criticism is moving nearer home; and, either a symptom or a cause, the present convention seems to require the extreme isolation of the hero in a world without trust. Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront*, the

schoolmaster in *Blackboard Jungle*, the lawyer in *Trial*, the householder in *The Desperate Hours*, the lonely stranger in *Bad Day at Black Rock*, are all driven back upon their own resources. These determined battlers may have a wife or girl friend quaking in the background; otherwise, there appears to be no-one on their side, and no suggestion that allies will emerge until after the fight has been won. Since violence, used to shock, to titillate, or simply as a matter of routine, plays a major part in all but one of these films, Hollywood might allow itself to be a little more generous in levelling up the odds.

II

The earnest young lawyer in *Trial* and his counterpart in *Phenix City Story*, the dedicated schoolmaster in *Blackboard Jungle* and the householder menaced by violence in *The Desperate Hours* are all positive characters, actively engaged in conflict. The question is, how valid are these conflicts, how genuinely are the films concerned with the issues they are raising?

In *Phenix City Story* (directed by Phil Karlson) the issues seem clear enough: a town controlled by racketeers must be cleaned up, and the film follows fairly closely the actual course of events in Phenix City, Alabama—the beating up of citizens who tried to form vigilante organisations, the murder of the newly nominated state attorney general, the eventual calling in of the State Militia to bring order to the town. But where de Rochemont's exposé pieces (*Boomerang*, etc.) employed a style roughly parallel with that of *Time* or *Life*, *Phenix City Story* angles its account in the manner of sensation-hungry tabloid journalism. There is an element of crude, almost naive, calculation behind the film's insistent exploitation of violence, running wholly counter to its earnest assurances that it is in the courts rather than by force that the racketeers must meet defeat. Exploring the mechanics of violence with sickening thoroughness, *Phenix City Story* sufficiently betrays its own motives.

The mainspring of *Blackboard Jungle*, a considerably more shrewd and expert production, is also violence: it is by disarming a young hooligan in his own formroom that the schoolmaster (Glenn Ford) eventually wins the respect of his recalcitrant pupils. Isolated between his tired and dejected colleagues and his classroom of potential delinquents, the idealist is bound, by the happy convention of the problem picture, to convert both parties. Having overstated its case at the outset, the film has to use the utmost contrivance to bring about this triumph; and if the conclusion is invalid, the earlier sequences, for all their parade of angry conviction, are made suspect by their machine-made sensationalism. After launching, by implication, a formidable attack on a section of the American educational system, the film slides off into some facile melodramatics. It is the hit and run technique, guaranteed to leave the audience with little conception of where the truth really lies.

Trial, directed by Mark Robson and adapted by Don Mankiewicz from his own novel, is less inclined to dodge issues than to find itself overwhelmed by them. The story concerns a young lawyer (played again by Glenn Ford) whose first case involves him in the defence of a Mexican boy charged with the murder of a high school girl. The case itself is highly technical, hingeing on whether the heart attack that actually killed the girl was brought on by attempted rape; the lawyer's colleague, it develops, is a Communist who has political motives for desiring the conviction of his own client; the judge is a negro; race feeling is running high in the district; and the lawyer has the threat of a McCarthyist investigation hanging over his head. By juggling these issues, the picture contrives to mount a simultaneous attack on Communism, McCarthyism and race prejudice, and to evade the necessity for making any clear statement of its own position. With little intellectual weight behind it, *Trial* is a smoothly opportunist piece of

screen pamphleteering. In a ruthless and satirical account of Communist tactics at a fund-raising rally, it finds the chance to hit out at a clearly defined and unimpeachable target; for the rest, it is mostly legal sleight-of-hand and political special pleading.

With *The Desperate Hours*, we are at any rate confronted with a simple battle between right (the average American family man) and wrong (three escaped convicts, trained in violence and mercilessly prepared to use it in enforcing their will). William Wyler's sober and deliberate treatment, and the care taken in building up the character of the father (Fredric March) as a symbol of the righteous man, indicate a determination that the film shall express "values" outside its obvious melodramatic framework. The denouement, when the hero at last has the upper hand, hesitates, and then leaves it to the police to shoot the gangster (Humphrey Bogart) seems devised to illustrate the triumph of civilised training over the instincts of brutality. But what this suburban stronghold stands for is civilisation expressed in terms of the deep freeze, the television aerial and the two-car garage. There can be no conflict, other than the basic melodramatic one, when against the sharply defined characterisation of the gangsters is set a group reminiscent of nothing so much as the happy families encountered in the breakfast food advertisements.

III

None of these films, in fact, can be said seriously to face

an issue, to follow a subject through without being sidetracked into the dead-end of melodrama. A mild dissatisfaction with the workings of the social machine runs through them all, but their concern is with striking attitudes rather than investigating conditions. For social comment less directly but more urgently expressed, one must look beyond the problem picture, with its relatively narrow focus, to those recent films which take for their central character the neurotic misfit, the rebel without a cause. They cut more deeply, since we find here an intensity, a sense of personal commitment scarcely encountered elsewhere. That the three most talented young players discovered in recent years—Marlon Brando, the late James Dean and Julie Harris—can all brilliantly convey the quality of truculent, semi-articulate adolescent rebellion, the brooding melancholies and sudden excitements, is a part of the American cinema's own discovery of adolescence as a particular age of anxiety.

This is notably the theme of *Rebel Without a Cause*, which derives its persuasiveness from its passionate, forceful and highly personal style, and from a full-length character study of the adolescent which actor, James Dean, and director, Nicholas Ray, have made more penetrating than anything in this line since J. D. Salinger wrote *The Catcher in the Rye*. The film's thesis is the responsibility of parents for the sins of their children, illustrated through the experiences of three schoolchildren, all from well-to-do families, whose troubles spring from the conflicts set up by unhappy family relationships. On the level of personal drama—and that,

"*Rebel Without a Cause*". Rebel (James Dean) and family (Jim Backus, Ann Doran).



essentially, is the film's level—most of this is admirably real and convincing.

An intriguing aspect of *Rebel Without a Cause*, though, is the extent to which it takes the fact of juvenile gangsterism for granted. Are we to assume that Buzz and his friends, whose equipment for the first day of term includes switch-knives and lengths of bicycle chain, also come from unhappy homes? Or are they children from the wrong side of the tracks and therefore (following the argument of *Blackboard Jungle*) predisposed to violence? And when a large part of the school turns out to watch the "chicken run", is the fact that no-one attempts to call a halt to this frightening exploit to be taken as evidence of mass-maladjustment? Clearly not, and to push the point is to be unfair to the film. But the effect is incongruously to suggest not that unhappy adolescents gravitate towards violence but that only the exceptionally lucky avoid it. In other words, the film takes us only a little farther than *Blackboard Jungle* towards the central problem, which is the reason for this instinctive distrust of the adult world of parents and schoolmasters, and of the discipline it attempts to impose.

Picnic shows us the rebel ten years later, restlessly aware that life is not going to meet his demands on it, feeling himself obscurely cheated, and desperately determined to salvage some degree of personal happiness from the wreck. The film is analysed in detail elsewhere in this issue, but the relevant point here is the dissatisfaction with conventional disciplines and restrictions that it stridently echoes. The ex-college athlete, although presented as a boaster, a liar, and a character entirely selfish, wins hands down over his rival, the rich young businessman. The film endorses by implication the local beauty queen's decision to throw up her small town life and follow him to a more romantic and precarious existence. And it seems a forlorn romanticism that expresses itself through these restless longings, these escapes and evasions.

The problems of the individual in coming to terms with his world—an issue faced in *Rebel Without a Cause* and evaded in *Picnic*—recurs in *The Big Knife*, Robert Aldrich's transcription of Clifford Odets' feverish study of the ways of Hollywood. In Odets' play, the standards of Hollywood are represented by a megalomaniac producer, prepared to connive at blackmail and murder to retain his hold over a popular star. The actor, thwarted in his efforts to release himself from bondage, to escape into the world of serious films, eventually kills himself rather than continue in his highly-paid servitude. Leaving aside the melodramatic excesses and insistent over-writing, the essential point of the play is its out-and-out defeatism. Practically speaking, escape routes other than suicide remain open to the idealist. Emotionally, the play accepts his defeat as part of his situation, and equips him with no more positive characteristic than a neurotic self-pity. For Odets' actor, as for the characters in Sartre's play, hell is simply other people.

IV

Unless the material is real and the concern with it passionate, social criticism becomes a somewhat arid and meaningless activity. I suggested earlier in this article that the current outburst of American self-criticism lacked direction and substance, that films of the calibre of *Trial* or *Blackboard*



"Trial": cause triumphant. Prosecutor (John Hodiak), mother (Katy Jurado), son (Rafael Campos) and defence counsel (Glenn Ford).

Jungle, for all their show of earnest conviction, fall back on the conventions of violence and the habits of over-statement that are at present undermining so much Hollywood production. Concerned with effects rather than causes, they convey a vague uneasiness, a generalised dissatisfaction, and a consoling conviction that determination and courage in the long run gain their just reward. The problem, provided that its terms of reference are sufficiently limited, inevitably admits of a solution.

Investigating the morality of private rather than public life, and taking character rather than situation as a starting point, films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* or *Picnic* are social documents almost in spite of themselves. They touch, in fact, society in its most elementary aspect, the individual's own adjustment to the world he has to live in. The discontent they reflect goes deeper than the dissatisfaction that is traditionally part of the equipment of the American intellectual: they consciously align themselves with the rebel or the neurotic in a passionate protest against the pressures of society. Here a basic sense of insecurity seems to be coming to the surface, a malaise that appears specifically American in its insistence on the rights rather than the obligations of the individual. It is the pursuit of happiness—the American dream—that is fundamentally in question.

In both *The Wild One* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, the adolescent gang stands as the symbol of revolt. *The Wild One* shows the collapse of a society's defences under strain; in *Rebel Without a Cause*, it is the individual personality that comes close to breakdown. And in both films the instinctive rebellion finds its expression in meaningless acts of violence, gestures of empty defiance. It is from this element of undirected protest that these films derive their profoundly disquieting quality. What, ultimately, is the reason for these irrational rebellions, these revolts whose significance lies in their explicit denial of a cause?



Paris 1955: Preston Sturges on location with Jack Buchanan for "The Notebooks of Major Thompson".

Conversation with Preston Sturges

PRESTON STURGES—whose comedies *Sullivan's Travels*, *The Lady Eve*, *The Palm Beach Story*, *Hail the Conquering Hero* and others were among the most brilliant Hollywood works of their time—was recently interviewed in Paris by Gordon Gow for the B.B.C. At this time he was nearing the end of shooting *The Notebooks of Major Thompson*, in English and French; he has described it as "the first bilingual picture which has been made all the way through without changing one actor. In each case the same actors do both versions". The principal players are Jack Buchanan, Martine Carol and Noël-Noël.

The material reprinted here by permission of Gordon Gow and the B.B.C. is taken from two radio programmes, "Talking of Films" and "A Cinema for Adults?"

Writer-Directors

Q: Mr. Sturges—the comedies you made in Hollywood were of a very distinctive kind. Did you find that when you began to make them—the ones you both wrote and directed, I mean—that Hollywood people found them a trifle eccentric, rather unlike the usual type of comedy?

*A: Well, the idea of putting the work of one unaided man on the screen was considered extremely eccentric. I remember, as a matter of fact, that when I first arrived in Hollywood it was announced that Jesse Lasky would produce a picture written by me directly for the screen—which is to say it had never been adapted from anything else. A very famous producer and studio executive, who has since regrettably disappeared, took four columns in the *Hollywood Reporter* to write a little article about the venture. He said that he wished Mr. Lasky and Mr. Sturges every success, but he viewed the project rather dimly because—since it was quite obvious that one and the same man could not write a tender love scene and a forceful he-man scene—two writers had always to be used. And since, he went on, the minimum to get even this amount of variety into a picture was two, then four were better than two and six was probably the ideal number of men to write a script. . . . The film in question, by the way, was *The Power and the Glory*, with Spencer Tracy. Anyway, that's what I fought against from the time I arrived in Hollywood. Writers worked like piano movers at that time, and when I started my little crusade for films to be by one man, my brother writers started disliking me too—because they pointed out that, by reducing the number of writers used on a single script, I was cutting down jobs.*

Q: All the same, the results proved satisfactory enough, and other writer-directors have sprung up since you began doing those things in Hollywood?

A: For a while there were so many writer-directors springing up that the old line directors who were not accustomed to doing their own writing wouldn't speak to any of us.

Major Thompson

Q: But now that you're making your first film in France, you are in fact doing an adaptation of a book by a Frenchman?

*A: I believe that *The Notebooks of Major Thompson*, as the film will be called in England and America probably, is the first time that anyone has tried to put a book of essays—for that is what Pierre Daninos' work is—on the screen. . . . I had to write two scripts for it. First I wrote what I think was a rather amusing story about a French author having invented a fictitious Englishman, and one day the fictitious Englishman appeared in Paris and said, "I mislaid my notebooks, what have you done with them?" . . . At the end it came out that he was a war hero who had lost his memory fighting for France; and the French author admitted that he had taken his notebooks—which he hadn't, of course—and gave this man who had no identity an authentic identity. It was a nice heartwarming story but it had nothing to do with the book. As the book had been such a huge success, we had to stick to it. So I took one chapter called "The Dear Hereditary Enemy" and, from three pages of this chapter, made a conjugal comedy in seven or eight scenes, about the English major and his French wife, and the dispute as to how their half-English half-French child will be brought up, whether it will learn the facts of history from the English or French point of view—which are diametrically opposed, of course. A very witty Frenchman remarked, on a visit to London, and seeing Waterloo Station and Trafalgar Square and things: "I don't understand why they name all their places after defeats over here".*

Working in France

Q: How do you find conditions in France, compared with conditions in Hollywood—where everything is obviously much more up-to-date, much more extravagant?

A: I find working in French studios perfectly delightful. There's an unexpected quality to it. It's very pleasing to me because I began in the theatre that way. I put my first play on Broadway for 2,500 dollars, including an out-of-town tryout, and it worked all right and started me off. The system in France is called *débrouillard*—which means, now you're in it, get yourself out of it. Everyone laughs about it, but nothing counts except what you eventually get on the screen. How you get it doesn't matter. I had Jack Buchanan and the French comedian Noël-Noël down at the Austerlitz station one day, and I had a rather difficult boom shot to do. This large, heavy camera had to rise about seven feet into the air, and turn while rising to follow the progress of the two actors—they get into a car on one side and the camera picks them up through the window on the other side. Well, I looked to see what our piece of apparatus was like. It was a highly ridiculous old boom, and we had no lead weights for it. I'm used to working with enormous booms that work perfectly, and these fellows were trying, with a few pieces of iron, to counterbalance the weight of the camera and get it to rise seven feet into the air. I knew that they always succeeded and I wasn't particularly worried. Presently the whole crew disappeared, and they came back a few minutes later while I was talking to an American journalist on the

platform. I looked round and I saw they had taken all the manhole covers and all the loose pieces of iron from the station, and tied them to the back of this boom with rope—and the shot was perfect. It couldn't have been better if they'd had a boom that cost half-a-million dollars.

That's the kind of thing we do constantly. You often pick up an actor in the middle of the street—if you want a cab, for instance, you just stop a passing cab and say, "*Do you think you could act?*" to the driver. He generally says, "*Yes, I'd be delighted to,*" and he means it. In America it would be an actor and a specially hired cab, but over here if you need a French taxi cab for your scene, you just stop one and say to the driver, "*This is your role, would you go over there and get made up?*" And the perfectly amiable old man does quite well.

Another thing: one day we were making some inserts of Ursula's feet. Ursula is Major Thompson's first wife, and there's a scene in which she says, "*By constantly telling me to wipe my feet when I came in, she finally attracted my attention to hers*". Here I had to show some rather eccentric shoes that Ursula was supposed to have worn, and I needed somebody to pose for the feet. There was no one available, so I looked round the set, and there was a make-up lady there. I said, "*Would you mind posing for the feet?*" She said, "*Well, I haven't got any stockings on*". "*Well,*" I said, "*that doesn't matter—we'll borrow stockings from the wardrobe*". So we borrowed the wardrobe lady's stockings, put them on the make-up lady, borrowed some shoes from my wife, and started making inserts of the feet. The result is exactly as good as if it had cost a thousand pounds. . . .

Hollywood 1942: Preston Sturges with cast of "*The Palm Beach Story*". (Joel McCrea, Mary Astor, Claudette Colbert, Rudy Vallee).



Luchino Visconti

GIULIO CESARE

CASTELLO



At the Fenice Theatre, Venice: Visconti and Alida Valli during the making of "Senso".

IN a country like Italy, where theatrical traditions developed in an atmosphere of princely magnanimity, the appearance of a director like Visconti is not in itself surprising. One might even argue that this offspring of a noble family (the names of his grandfather, father and uncle are closely bound up with the theatrical history of Milan, almost until the third decade of this century) has grafted on to his own aristocratic temper an unprejudiced but passionate taste for polemics. A personality, in effect, of transition, who has acquired from his family an air of sumptuous aristocracy, but has manifested it, more significantly, in a manner often socially and politically aggressive.

Visconti's background might induce some people to write him off as an example, perhaps, of superior dilettantism. Colour might even be lent to this idea by certain biographical notes—that he wavered between committing himself wholly to the theatre (he had a passing acquaintance with the Arts Theatre at Milan in 1928-29) and the breeding of racehorses. But, if in the world of Italian theatre—abandoned, in spite of everything, to easygoing improvisation—there exists a true professional, Luchino Visconti, with his far-reaching and serious professional awareness in every department, is the only one. Already, in 1936-37, we find his name as assistant to Jean Renoir in Paris, on *Les Bas Fonds* and *Une Partie de Campagne*: a more than casual association when one

remembers that it was renewed in 1940, for the making of *Tosca*, which Renoir had to relinquish on the outbreak of war, after a few days' shooting, leaving it in the hands of his assistant Carl Koch; and an important association when one reflects that Visconti's experience with Renoir is an indispensable factor in explaining *Ossessione*—the film with which, in 1941-43, Luchino Visconti made his name as director.

II

To relate *Ossessione* correctly to the Italian cinema of its time, one must remember that it was made when a sterile sentimental-comic strain, subsequently dubbed the "white telephone" era, was mixed, for obvious propaganda reasons, with a turgid stream of nationalistic themes. The petit-bourgeois inspiration of the early Camerini comedies was almost spent; Blasetti was frittering away his natural exuberance in eclectic futilities; and in general the Italian cinema was wearily groping for a *raison d'être*, mainly through the refinements of a new group of formalists with a literary-artistic background (Soldati, Lattuada, Castellani, Chiarini), and through the first psychological experiments of de Sica and Zavattini. A solitary exponent of inspiration stemming directly from contemporary reality was de Robertis, with his tendency (due to his military origins) to treat

documentary subjects without theatricality, even if not without a vague sort of rhetorical structure. (It is worth recalling, incidentally, that another director was also evolving in the same direction at this time: Roberto Rossellini.)

These separate intelligent efforts were not enough, however, to offset the overriding impression of the Italian cinema, which was one of careless and humiliating triviality. Though, in the work of these younger groups, there was no immediately noticeable striving towards a new realism, a pursuit of formal perfection was probably the only consolation in a climate so thoroughly repressed and stifled. (The case of de Robertis is important, because his films—though tied to official credos and often degenerating into cliché—are seen by many critics today as the source of neo-realism.) In this atmosphere, the French cinema exercised a quite particular fascination for intellectuals; it was then at its height, trailing names like Renoir and Carné, impregnated by literary realism and dominated mainly by a bitter pessimism. But, although the pessimism seemed a healthy corrective to the official compulsory optimism of Italy, the literary reality was replaced by a sharper, more direct brand—reality *tout court*. It was hardly surprising that any group devoted to the cinema, seeking a new and vigorous programme, should turn in this direction.

Renoir, besides being the most significant French director, was also closest to realism; and it was his teaching which laid the basis of *Ossessione*. The group of young men who had elected Visconti as their spokesman (himself not so young by then—born in 1906—and still restlessly seeking his true vocation) had begun to battle in the columns of the review "Cinema" for a *Verghiano* cinema: a cinema equivalent to the direct though poetic realism of the writer Verga. The group's manifesto indicated that its initial project would have been *L'Amante di Gramigna*, but the censor from the Ministry of Popular Culture intervened to prevent it. But a second factor in the genesis of *Ossessione* was almost as important as that of the French cinema—the fascination exercised by a world, far away and almost forbidden, a young world bursting with new life, represented by the literature of the U.S.A. Cecchi, Vittorini and Pavese were the chief contributors to its discovery. Looking for a subject for his first film, Visconti turned to a novel then unpublished in Italy, though it had already provided the material for a French film (directed by Pierre Chenal) and was to generate another in the States (directed by Tay Garnett); James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was to influence many films with its compound of sensuality and crime. This writer, persistently unfolding almost the same story in novel after novel, was a better example than most of the cynically detached, drily journalistic style. But he had evidently been used by Visconti as a mere pretext; this could be seen from the stills of the film, which began to circulate in 1942, counteracting the effects of the French cinema and revealing a preoccupation with form quite unusual in Italian production. They suggested an attempt to express some genuinely national qualities in a way that no director had tried before. For example, Visconti changed the setting to Italy, altered both the characters and the narrative, infusing them with fiery latin ardours, a wealth of local colour and allusion (as in the character of the Spaniard, never clearly defined, a representative of human strength rather than a vague symbol of sexuality). Though such vague "populism" was regarded with suspicion by the fascist censors, who did their best to obstruct the film, its origin remained essentially foreign, its visual mood influenced by Renoir and his French associates. Though its variability was the result of compromise, of adapting ideas taken from a very different world,

there was genuine revelation in the way it reached the live, untouched and violent heart of provincial Italy.

Other qualities were also worth noting: the rigorous treatment of the narrative, the capacity for seizing on character (with the clear revelation of deep powers in a formerly conventional enough actress, Clara Calamai), the beauty of the photography. For the first time a natural and familiar Italy became the inner motive and mainstay of a film, in contrast to the inflated artificiality of the official picture (predecessors such as Walter Ruttmann's *Pirandellian Steel*, in 1933, had little importance and character). The Ferrara lowlands, Ferrara itself, and Ancona, did not merely provide a casual rustic background to the action, but became a significant part of the film—monotonous ribbons of asphalt, the sandy reaches of the Po, the popular drinking saloons and public gardens, the town slums, the zestful fairgrounds busy with drinkers, musicians, singers. With *Ossessione* the Italian countryside, in its daily, least familiar aspect, entered into the Italian cinema. Automatically the film assumed symbolic value as a "breakaway" movement, though this was temporarily interrupted by the sudden turn of military and political events, and had to await revival on a collective scale: the fruits of which were to be harvested under the trade mark of "neo-realism".

III

External circumstances—the precarious situation of the Italian cinema and Visconti's own uncompromising attitude to his work—delayed his second contribution to the rebirth of Italian films for some years. Meanwhile, not without exciting widespread comment, Visconti made his name as a theatre director. The first phase of this creative activity reached, in some aspects, an almost phenomenal character. For a time one could hardly distinguish, owing to the curiosity and excitement of the fashionable public in Rome and Milan and to a certain connivance on the part of the director with his audience, the merely "snob" aspects from the genuinely original ones. Just as Visconti was opposed to facile compromise in the cinema, so in the theatre he took issue against the lazy routine, the clumsy acting, the rough and ready buffoonery which dominated the Italian stage up to that time. He entered strongly into the debate, launched some years previously by Silvio d'Amico, for an Italian theatre in line with modern stage developments—an argument begun in the last years of the fascist regime, thanks above all to the Academy of Dramatic Art and the individual efforts of a few independents, and the examples set by famous foreign directors invited to work in the Italian theatre. To this argument



"Ossessione". Massimo Girotti, Clara Calamai.



"La Terra Trema". 'Ntoni.

Visconti contributed an aggressive, uncompromising open-mindedness, his personal financial resources, and an enormous natural talent for the theatre.

Visconti's arrival in the Italian theatre dates from January 30th, 1945, from which time first-nighters learned to look upon a new Visconti production as an exciting event. Nearly all were impressed, apart from the stimulus of a "spicy" text, by the extreme refinement of the stagecraft, the surprising and usually provocative accessories, which reflected Visconti's desire to sweep away poverty-stricken traditions. This was only possible, incidentally, because Visconti himself was prepared to pay for it when necessary; just as the rehearsal periods assumed extraordinary length (thirty to sixty days for a single production), the repeated dress-rehearsals, in a closed theatre, usually resulted in a postponement of the opening in order to polish up unsatisfactory details. Again, he abolished the prompter, excluded latecomers to the theatre after the play had begun, suppressed curtain calls at the end of each act, presenting his actors to the public only at the end of the performance. Apart from these incidental modernisations, there were durable indications of an original personality in the theatre, strong enough to turn all its components to his own use, and elevating the function of the director to a real creative level. In a country dominated for centuries by the tradition of the great actor, this was a controversial, revolutionary achievement—if only, for reasons unnecessary to recall here, because the Italian theatre was so singularly old-fashioned. Through fascist dictatorship, aggravated by war, Italy found herself, at the end of hostilities, backward even in modernising the repertory theatre. Once the war had ended, there was a wild rush after any kind of novelty, even if it were obviously dated. In the midst of this general craving for modernity, Visconti became known for his careful choice of plays, the consistency of his search for authors who could satisfy the new audiences, as well as his spectacular talent for staging.

In the more or less constant stream of plays that Visconti offered his public in 1945, the good alternated with the not so good, the significant play with the *succès de scandale*. But though, in this succession of French and American plays, one could see a genuine desire to launch the work of new writers, once in production a tendency towards theatrical exaggeration, violent visual effect, showed through. Visconti developed an almost obsessive devotion to exact truth of detail. There was the case of the genuinely red beard grown by Calindri for his part of Jeeter in *Tobacco Road*, the conscientious search for a real whistle for the train in *Euridice*. (Sandro De Feo has told, in "La Stampa", the tragi-comic episode of the night of the dress-rehearsal, with

sleepless actors waiting for the arrival of a whistle authentic enough to satisfy the director.) Then there were the genuine 1900 suitcases, the real Swiss cowbells, and the faithfully reproduced banknotes (since it was impossible to obtain genuine ones of the period) used in *Como Le Foglie*.

Since the basis of theatrical art is the creation of a scenic illusion, such scrupulous preoccupation with detail may seem excessive—especially as its results are often unnoticed by the public. (The same is even true in the cinema, where Visconti makes similarly exacting demands.) Such excesses, however, match the personality of a director like Visconti, impatient of distinctions between the various forms of expression, prepared to carry realism so far that it breaks all the bonds of illusion, dispensing with artificial aids on the stage just as he makes use of natural exteriors in the classical theatre. They reflect, too, the man of action involved in the general situation of the theatre and profoundly concerned with its theory. In reacting against the humiliation of a careless, impoverished theatre, Visconti ran to the extreme of an uncompromising search for reality; but this only reflected his belief that to remain satisfied with a mere approximation to reality would begin a dangerous compromise.

The plays produced in that first year were, Jean Cocteau's *Les Parents Terribles* and *La Machine à Ecrire*, Hemingway's *The Fifth Column*, Anouilh's *Antigone*, Sartre's *Huis Clos*, Marcel Achard's *Adamo*, and *Tobacco Road*, John Kirkland's version of the novel by Erskine Caldwell: serious plays like the first, fourth and fifth, and pretexts for showmanship like the third, in spite of the author's famous name. All of them occasioned "scandal" for a sensation-eager audience—the aura of incest in Cocteau, homosexuality in Sartre and Achard, brutality and amorality in Caldwell. On the whole the selection was discerning, though the inclusion of a dramatically feeble play like *Adamo* showed a tendency towards sensational dilettantism. But *Les Parents Terribles*, *Antigone* and *Huis Clos* were revealing experiences, partly because of the highly charged, intimate nature of the plays, partly because of the director's ability to build up atmospheric tension by every conceivable means. The closed-in feeling of decay in Cocteau's brooding house, the agonised fury of the Sartrean damned, the elegant humility of Anouilh's parallels between Greek myth and the contemporary problems of humanity—the strength of Visconti's integrating power was most completely displayed in *Tobacco Road*, which in its pursuit of reality went far beyond the text itself and, like *Ossessione*, confirmed the influence of American literature. In the theatre, Visconti was increasingly to prefer authors like Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

"La Terra Trema". Sicilian girl.



After *The Glass Menagerie* (1946), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947, and revised in 1951) represented the extreme of Visconti's obsession with out-and-out naturalism, and his tendency to overburden the action with suggestive but often superfluous additions. In *Streetcar*, for example, the director's desire to enliven his backgrounds resulted in filling the scene with suggestive dancers and even holding up the action while a beautiful half-caste crooned seductively. Typical of the same irrepressible tendency towards the spectacular was *Crime and Punishment* (1946), Gaston Baty's adaptation of Dostoevsky, interpreted by Visconti with sensational originality, including an unexpected acrobatic display. This production sparked off endless discussion and seemed to many, because of its distortions, the most serious sign of a growing aestheticism in Visconti's work.

IV

An unusually lush, balletic production of *Le Mariage de Figaro* followed, and also aroused considerable comment. Some years later, in 1951, Visconti made a declaration about his work in the theatre during this period, and also dealt with the theatre's limited realistic possibilities in comparison with the cinema. "Some of my productions, especially those soon after the war, were given a particular treatment not only to please my own tastes, but also the public's. . . ." The word "also" conveys his opinion that director and public should have a reciprocal interest in each other, at least so far as the defects and excesses of a production are concerned. It is a fact that, by means of such superficialities, and perhaps because of them, Visconti succeeded in seducing a considerable section of the public. The bourgeois public, that is to say, attracted to Visconti by various significant elements—his fondness for socially "advanced" ideas in contrast to his aristocratic, conservative origins—found its masochistic instincts excited by his work, reacting in a way peculiar to the upper middle-class.

One doesn't know if Visconti, in this declaration, was also alluding to his production of *As You Like It*, with additional scenery and costumes by Salvador Dali, in 1948. It is certain that he took up the defence of his own work with every appearance of sincerity. To those who reproached him, the day after the showing of *La Terra Trema*, for abandoning neo-realism in favour of a display of brilliance and a pastoral, arcadian, rococo style, he retorted that, "the modern spectacle tends towards the mood of dancing, not in an aesthetic sense, but in a movement of liberation". He expounded his own objective as a search for "enchantment" in the popular interest, in contrast to the deathly pallor of the middle-class theatre. Curious to say, as examples of the bourgeois theatre "perhaps in the sunset of its age" he chose Ibsen and Chekov; it was Chekov who, some years later, was to provide the material for a production that, in its maturity and integration, opened a new phase.

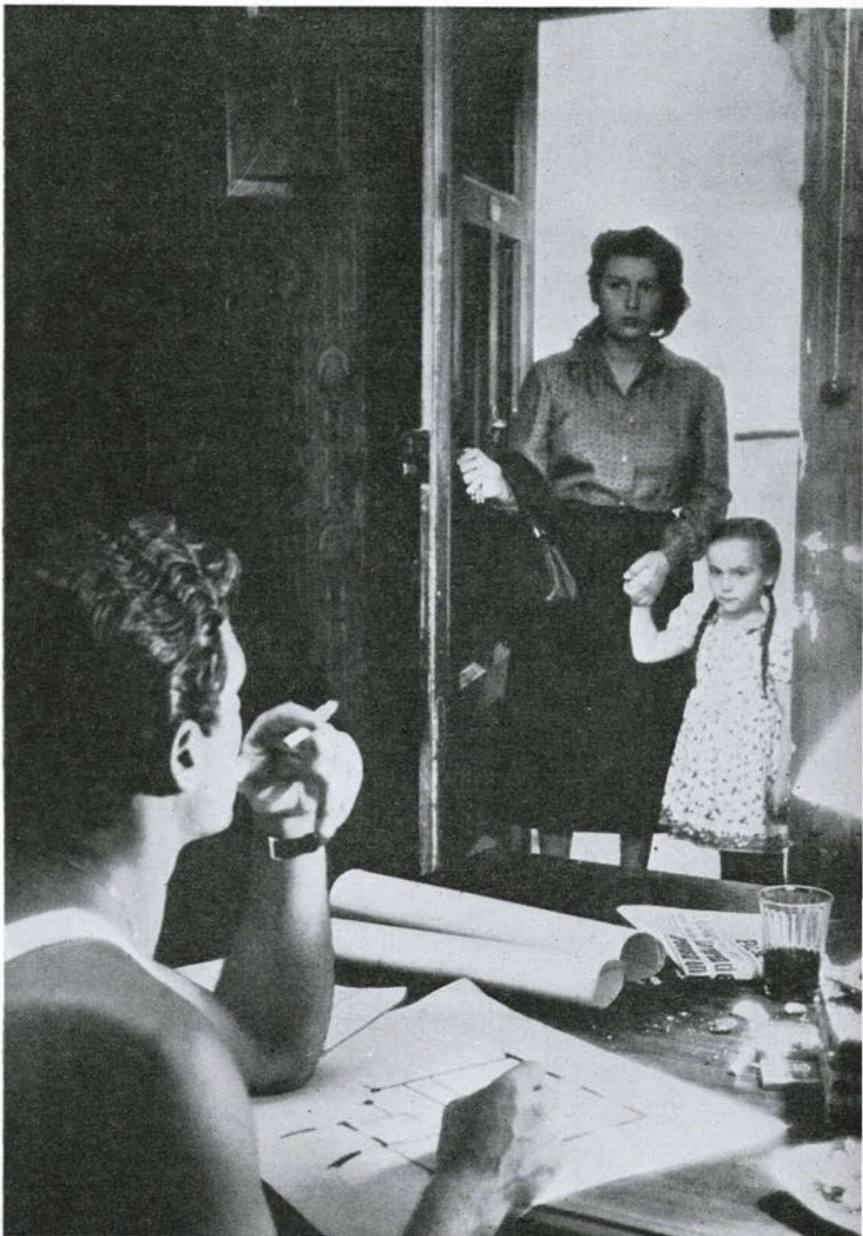
Clearly this first postwar period mirrored a precise and definite phase in Visconti's evolution, apart from his deliberate search for maximum effect and complete freedom of orientation; the 1949 production of *Troilus and Cressida*, Visconti's only experiment with the open air spectacle, undoubtedly confirmed it. It had a wealth of properties without precedent in Italy (the thirty million lire production cost has only been surpassed by Renato Castellani's *Twelfth Night* in 1954), and Visconti used Shakespeare's provocative text, so hybrid and unequal, as the basis for a portrayal of the clash between East and West. He perceived in it a situation not unlike the Cold War, and also the prospect of a pleasing parody of militarism. The resulting inequalities may be explained by contrasting the exquisite, miniaturist stylisation of the costumes by Maria de Matteis and the impossible attempt at

realism in the battle scenes (the setting was the enchanting Boboli gardens). But productions like *As You Like It* and *Troilus and Cressida* had the value of bringing Visconti decisively not only to Italian but to world attention; and demonstrated how, through an enormous breadth of vision, and a costly refinement of means and effects, he had contributed more than any other to the revitalisation of the Italian theatre.

Curiously, the elaborate *Troilus and Cressida* production was to mark the end of one phase in Visconti's career. Perhaps the controversies in which he had taken part led him to think again about the means and ends of his creative work. After a year and a half's absence from the theatre, he returned noticeably changed, and the public at the Eliseo theatre found him enriched by a more personal enthusiasm, a more rigorous concern with essentials. The period of scandal, of breaking away, of showy ideology, of an elaboration not altogether devoid of snobbish motives, was over. The factor most powerfully contributing to its end was Visconti's fundamental experience in the cinema, the making of *La Terra Trema*.

V

Today, *La Terra Trema* seems the major work of Italian neo-realism, the film in which austere narrative in the Rossellini style gives place to a kind of lyrical epic. The idea from which Visconti's film springs is more complex and elaborated. *La Terra Trema* was in fact the "Verghian" film



Proletarian mother: Anna Magnani in "Bellissima".



Countess and lover: Alida Valli and Farley Granger in "Senso".

that the young militant aesthetes of the "Cinema" group were longing for between 1941 and 1943—and the epithet is literally true, since the plot is taken faithfully enough from Verga's novel of peasant life, "I Malavoglia". But, for Verga's fatalism, Visconti substituted a more decisive social consciousness; his film revolves around the attempts of a young Sicilian fisherman to liberate himself and his family from their slavery to the middle-men. All the same, *La Terra Trema* is a story of defeat. The time was still not ripe for the victory of 'Ntoni. Above all—and this was also the theme of the novel—his efforts failed through their individualism; the secret and the force of an exploited class must lie in solidarity and unity. This conception served as Visconti's defence against the critics, especially left-wing intellectuals, who accused him of betraying his political beliefs to a defeatist pessimism. It might, also, have emerged more clearly if Visconti had been able to make his film, as originally planned, a trilogy. To the "episode of the sea" he had planned to add the episodes of the sulphur-mines and the fields—after suffering two defeats, the peasants would have succeeded in occupying their lands, with full legal rights, thanks to the mass intervention of their fellow-workers. But after the numerous production difficulties that hindered *La Terra Trema* (the first episode retained the title originally intended for the trilogy as a whole), it would have been ingenuous to believe that the rest of it would ever be made. As a result,

Visconti's future became rather more precarious; at Venice the film received a chilly reception from the fairly "snob" Lido public, and shared second prize (the Golden Lion going to Olivier's *Hamlet*).

Visconti was obliged to cut his film drastically (from two hours forty minutes to just under two hours), to break up the measured, spacious rhythm of its montage—in which full play had been given to certain hesitations and repetitions in human speech and behaviour—and to substitute for the original dialect a more conventional form of Italian dialogue. Indeed, the dialect—as the opening commentary made clear—is the language of the Sicilian poor, and was conceived as a basic part of the authenticity of this story of fisherfolk; Visconti shot the film with no scripted dialogue, using only the actual words suggested by the fishermen themselves in the parts they were called to play.

"My first concern in the cinema is to tell stories of living men", Visconti wrote in a programme note on *Ossessione*, "of men living in events, not events for their own sake. *The cinema that interests me is anthropomorphic*. Of all the tasks concerning me as director, the one that excites me most is working with actors, finding human material out of which to create new men—who themselves create, by living it, the new reality of art. First and foremost the artist is a man . . . I do not deny . . . that a star, in the sense of an actor who has acquired technique and experience, may possess these primary qualities; I mean only that many less well-known actors possess them equally, not to speak of those who, besides contributing the attraction of their own simplicity, are often sounder and more convincing exactly because, as products of an unspoiled environment, they are often better men". These words explain the special attitude of Visconti in creating characters and, at the same time, actors—thanks to his immense capacity for stimulating and controlling his artists. *Ossessione* contained the surprising revelation (which was not its only one) of the hitherto insignificant Clara Calamai in a deeply acute study of human stupidity; *La Terra Trema*, with its enormous simplicity and purity, draws on the interior power with which its fishermen and peasants live out their story. The insight and suggestive power of Visconti is all the more extraordinary when one realises, as he himself later said, that there was hardly any social or political consciousness among the inhabitants of Acì Trezza.

Visconti's breadth of vision, his awareness of the human, psychological and social motives implicit in his subject, his firm rejection of the picturesque and superficial, and the confident severity of his style, made it inevitable that *La Terra Trema* should remain unknown to a great part of the Italian public. It was restricted to film society distribution, and impressed itself on more discerning critics as the most perfect and complete expression of the new "Italian" style. Many critics have remained rather cold to it, not always for aesthetic reasons—more often, in fact, on account of political bias. It will need time for justice to be done to it. The language of *La Terra Trema* is the clear, simple language of the classics, achieved without a predetermined scenario but rather in the manner of the early Eisenstein. The influence of the great Russian silent directors is fairly evident in the film, but it is indirect, more in spirit than letter; the other obvious influence is Flaherty's. But Visconti's use of dignified, expansive dialogue to link his film together, amply allowing for the variations in rhythm which its delivery demanded, is entirely his own. Though its refinement, in fact, is of a different order, it is related to his own more balletic productions in the theatre; the minutely studied realism of *La Terra Trema* is the result of a stylistic mastery that is sometimes even too exacting.

VI

Bellissima, Visconti's next film, was the result of a kind of compromise. He made it after being obliged to discard various alternative ideas. It was his first film from a subject



Theatre: Laura Adani (Sister Bessie Rice) and Massimo Girotti ("Dude Boy") in Visconti's production of "Tobacco Road".

by Zavattini, who presented the case of a Roman woman infatuated with the idea of turning her little girl into a film star. Pursuing her dream, she makes herself ridiculous and ends up bitterly disappointed with the impossibility of her desires. Working on the script with him, Visconti had the astute Suso Cecchi d'Amico, and in the course of development the story underwent some not unimportant modifications. The ending was changed; the girl finally wins her contract, but the mother (proletarian and not, as originally, lower middle-class) rejects the opportunity, now bitterly aware of the illusory, faithless nature of the world into which she has tried to escape and, at the same time, of the value of her own humble origins. The moral, while remaining the same, was brought into sharper relief.

Bellissima is a masterly essay in solid realism, exuberantly evoking and contrasting two worlds: the artificial one of the CineCitta studios, the humble but genuine one of tenement life. Above all, it was intended to be a portrait of a woman, a proletarian mother designed to stand out with splendid authority, and Anna Magnani's performance revealed an extraordinary wealth of human quality. This time, for obvious reasons, Visconti called in a professional actress; but his authoritative presence as director was made almost unnecessary by the penetration and accuracy she brought to the role—above all in the scenes which least called for exaggerated theatrical display. The tender perception of the scene with Walter Chiari by the river-bank is a notable case in point.

An epilogue to this happy collaboration was provided in the episode that Visconti came to direct for *Siamo Donne* (1953). This was a film "inquiry" by Zavattini designed to provide a number of famous Italian actresses with the opportunity for a sincere, courageous personal confession. In practice, the film was the result of too many compromises. Fantasy tended to dominate reality, while the reverse, of course, should have happened. Visconti's episode with Magnani, however, retained a fundamentally real quality so long as it confined itself to a somewhat trivial anecdote. This concerned a heated argument between a not very well-known actress (the time is 1943) and a taxi-driver who insists on charging extra for her pet dog. The quarrel ended in a police station, which offered the director an opportunity for some pungent local touches.

Theatre: Vittorio Gassmann as Kowalski, Rina Morelli as Blanche in Visconti's production of "A Streetcar Named Desire".

VII

I have pointed out the significance of Visconti's return to the theatre in 1951, after a prolonged absence, during which he was occupied in unproductive scenario writing for the cinema. The production which illustrated his new retreat from elaboration of style was Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. For this play, characteristic of the best "social" traditions of American theatre, Visconti took for his model Elia Kazan's original production on Broadway, in which the semi-expressionistic effects required by the technique of the writing hardly ever clashed with the general tone of intimate realism. This was followed by Goldoni's *La Locandiera*, the first time Visconti treated a classical play without resorting to showy, balletic prettiness; he offered to the public a realistic Goldoni, with simple scenery and austere costumes designed by himself and Piero Tosi—on the whole a brilliantly revealing piece of restoration. Then, with Chekov's *Three Sisters*, he created a theatrical experience that remains almost unique in the history of the contemporary theatre. With this production Visconti achieved a final realism, following the most advanced teaching of Stanislavsky; the subtle magic with which he evoked atmosphere—not pushed to the limits of naturalism—gave even inanimate things a complex significance. The mood of the whole was limpid and balanced, exactly realistic. This was one of the few occasions in the theatre when the true meaning of direction, critical and interpretative at the same time, could be grasped. Through a profound scrutiny of historical background, and a complete understanding of the psychological dimension, Visconti restored the Chekov text, obscured by the course of years, to its original aspect.

The same realistic historical approach lies behind *Senso* (1954), which marked Visconti's return to the cinema and is the last film he has made to date. Yet, though the background of *Senso* is historical, the treatment is historical, the plot is purely romantic, freely adapted from a tale by Camillo Boito: an essay in narrative far removed from the psychological, lucid to the point of cynicism. Boito's love story—about an Italian lady of noble birth, distraught with passion for a handsome Hapsburg official, an incorrigible corrupter of women, shorn of all trace of a sense of honour—interested Visconti (who made the film after abandoning various other projects) because the characters were clearly capable of taking on more significant proportions than Boito's story allowed them. Visconti's noblewoman is entirely different from Boito's, who is portrayed only in the light of sensual passion; she is a supporter of the Risorgimento, a woman aware of the march of events, even though she finally betrays the cause for the sake of personal luxury. So, too, the official with his hopeless moral depravity is



conscious that his world is rushing towards its ruin, and looks on with a bitter, almost masochistic pleasure. He is beyond salvation; and Visconti emphasises the allegorical significance of his final execution, when he meets an ignoble death, shot for desertion after being denounced by his mistress, who has grown exasperated by his baseness and indifference. The woman, too, stands morally condemned, with equal relentlessness, since she did not hesitate to sacrifice a high ideal to serve her private ego.

Visconti's countess, moreover, is a symbol of anxiety, of an obscure and unresolved crisis deep in the heart of the ruling class. Franz, the man, is content to foresee the gathering twilight with the cold eye of reason, and stands by, watching; Livia, the woman, instinctively shares the sentiments of the new, rising world, but is betrayed by her very nature. The symbol of this new world is her cousin, the *marchese* Ussoni, who serves as an ideal link between the ordinary people and the more alert section of the upper classes. Unfortunately, however, like several other non-marginal characters in the story, he is briefly and inconclusively sketched. Starting with the conviction that he could create a film of romantic proportions, exceeding external limitations, Visconti found at the last moment that, due to production requirements, he must cut and prune drastically. The result is that the link between the personal story of Franz and Livia, and the epic multiplicity of background against which it is played, is sometimes only intended, and not conveyed. In the battle scene at Custoza—depicted, perhaps rather too briefly, in two sequences remarkable for their unity of composition and richness of harmony—the contrast between the regular army and the Italian "patriotic" forces should, according to Visconti's intentions, have been much more finely pointed; but here, particularly, one senses intervention by the censor, who wielded his blue pencil a second time, even more drastically, after the film's showing in Venice.

This vastly ambitious and profound work, full of mature promise, has in short suffered from a restriction of liberty, which has cracked its solid structure, broken the smooth sequence of certain narrative passages and psychological twists. However, *Senso* remains a film of great importance and beauty. Important because of the new realistic perspective it offers to the historical film; beautiful because of the intensity of certain psychological revelations, the skill with which atmosphere is evoked, the extraordinary dexterity with which Technicolor is made to serve realistic ends—with the colour-consciousness, moreover, of someone who has closely studied and absorbed the lessons to be learnt from many painters. Venice, with the shifting scene of its alleys and canals, the splendour of a gala night at the Fenice, the gentle green countryside of the Veneto sprinkled with the mansions of the rich, the battle of Custoza with its clash and clangour and its blood-soaked retreat—all these are achieved with brilliant effects of colour (the cameramen were G. R. Aldo and Robert Krasker), psychological, epic and purely descriptive.

The husband in *Ossessione* has a passion for *bel canto*; the music track in *Bellissima* is intelligently and ironically woven round Donizetti's "Elisir d'amore"; love, in *Senso*, in conformity with the taste and fashion of the romantic era, is seen in the guise of melodrama, as the prologue informs us, during a performance of *Il Trovatore* at the Fenice. One of Visconti's closest collaborators, by the way, has told how he conceived the idea for *Senso* during a performance of that opera at the Scala. The deliberately melodramatic treatment of the story is emphasised by the use of themes from Bruckner's 7th symphony, which provide a full-blooded romantic comment. It is perhaps not surprising that Visconti, with

his love of music, should—after *Senso*—have moved from the cinema and the drama to the lyric stage, with Gaspare Spontini's *La Vestale*, which was performed at the Scala in Milan in December, 1954. This production was a symptom of his widening interests, developed in the ballet *Mario the Magician*, with libretto by Visconti himself, from the story by Thomas Mann and music by Franco Mannino, and in his second work for the Scala, Bellini's *La Sonnambula* (March, 1955).

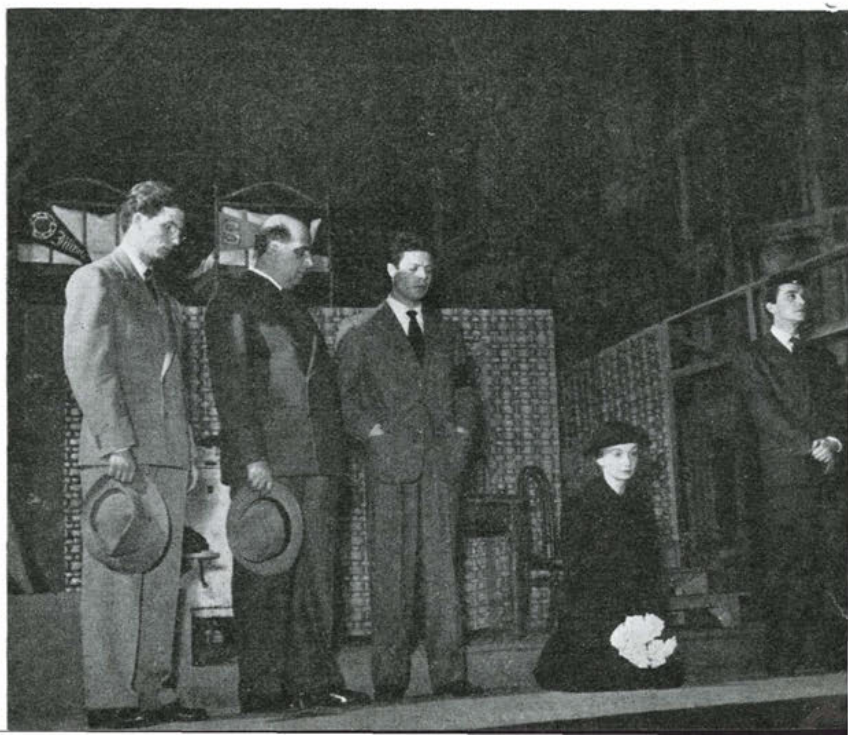
VIII

Visconti's strong personality has gathered round him collaborators of some importance. In the theatre, his influence on actors has been particularly noticeable; the emergence of Rina Morelli as a sensitive and finely talented actress is a case in point, and it seems that now she will only work with Visconti, whose direction she has always followed with complete humility. Another notable achievement is Paolo Stoppa's transformation from an exuberant comic actor into a very gifted dramatic one; also the moulding or development of highly skilled young actors such as Giorgio De Lullo and Marcello Mastrojanni. Visconti has had, however, no notable influence upon authors. In the theatre he has tended to choose plays from the contemporary French and, more frequently, American theatre—the latter welcome because they offer an opportunity to depict a capitalistic society in crisis. The lack of any author-actor collaboration such as existed in France between Giraudoux and Jouvet's, in fact, indicative of Visconti's contribution to the Italian theatre—and at the same time of its present state, which is characterised by a late flowering of the "production" cult, aimed at filling the vacuum created by a lack of dramatic writers. Visconti is an unusually prolific example of this late flowering. His position *vis-à-vis* the cinema is vastly different; here he is the focal point of a new stream of thought, tending to give greater importance to his country's spiritual and human inheritance as a whole. The dual development of Visconti as an artist parallels the growth of these two art forms, theatre and cinema, respectively. The theatre, at a time of crisis and lacking new inspiration, has cultivated "production" as a creative work and an exercise in critical expression; similarly the cinema—which today, together with a certain type of narrative literature, is the medium in which all the most lively and vigorous elements of creative activity in Italy are flourishing—now seeks its development in richer and more lavish display.

The originality of Visconti's work, influenced though it is by external factors, the provocativeness of some of his productions, and his political position, have all served to intensify the

(Continued on page 220)

Theatre: the last scene in Visconti's production of "Death of a Salesman". Franco Interlenghi, Gaetano Verna, Marcello Mastrojanni, Rina Morelli, Giorgio de Lullo.



PEOPLE OF TALENT (5)

Joan Greenwood

IT is less than a year since *Moonfleet*; and already one misses her. The Hollywood journey, besides, had been preceded by one to Paris, where she appeared as a cat-burglar in a minor film with Bourvil. It seems that the British cinema, which developed her, is in danger of losing this extraordinary actress; but she is the kind of exquisite, idiosyncratic luxury that it can ill afford to lose.

First of all, Joan Greenwood demands a surrender to personality. Her use of deliberate ironic mannerism, her method of speaking lines of dialogue as if, as one critic has remarked, "she dimly suspected some hidden menace in them", reflects a nature which can best be described as beautifully eccentric. The eccentricity is not wholly of our time, and for this reason it flowered most fully in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *Father Brown* (the latter, though technically present-day, seemed really to be masquerading in modern dress). Her work with Robert Hamer brought out a *fin-de-siècle* perverseness and elegance, a joy in the refined but outrageous gesture; and in her feline, purring yet deadly Sybilla, her playful widowed Lady Warren (she must have poisoned Lord Warren, one thought immediately), there was a suggestion of the leisure, the *outré* sophistication of another age. The same love of the deliciously freakish links two other performances with these: her Gwendolen in Anthony Asquith's adaptation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, supercilious, wickedly affected—above all in her display of lorgnette and her insolent filling of Cecily Cardew's cup of tea with innumerable lumps of sugar—and her Lady Clarissa, the drawing, mocking but somehow formidable villainess of *Moonfleet*.

Yet this is not the whole truth. Though the extraordinariness is always there, in the quizzical scoop of the voice and the faintly derisive air of astonishment at wherever—and with whoever—she happens to be, she is by no means as limited an actress as one might expect. Coming down to earth, she knows at once, really, where she is. Her Scots girl in *Whisky Galore*, her industrialist's daughter in *The Man in the White Suit*, her suburban girl in *Knave of Hearts*, were all genuinely felt and observed creations. Whether slanted to comedy (the delicious moment in *Whisky Galore* when she refuses to admit the customs officials in the middle of the night with the simple announcement, "Post Office is closed") or to drama (the beautifully played scene with Gérard Philipe in *Knave of Hearts* when she suspects he is going to desert her), they have a subtle individual truth. And they are never simple: the reward, perhaps, of the eccentric's temperament.

Now that costume pictures are out of fashion, it may be a long time again before we see her superbly frilled, parasolled and hatted, moving through a comedy of manners with that perfect, ruthless fastidiousness. But the contemporary scene also has need of her, with her special, unexpected intuitions of character, and it would be sad if she were lost to the stage. (Devotees, incidentally, may remember her in 1939 as Little Mary in *The Women*.) No doubt she was delightful on



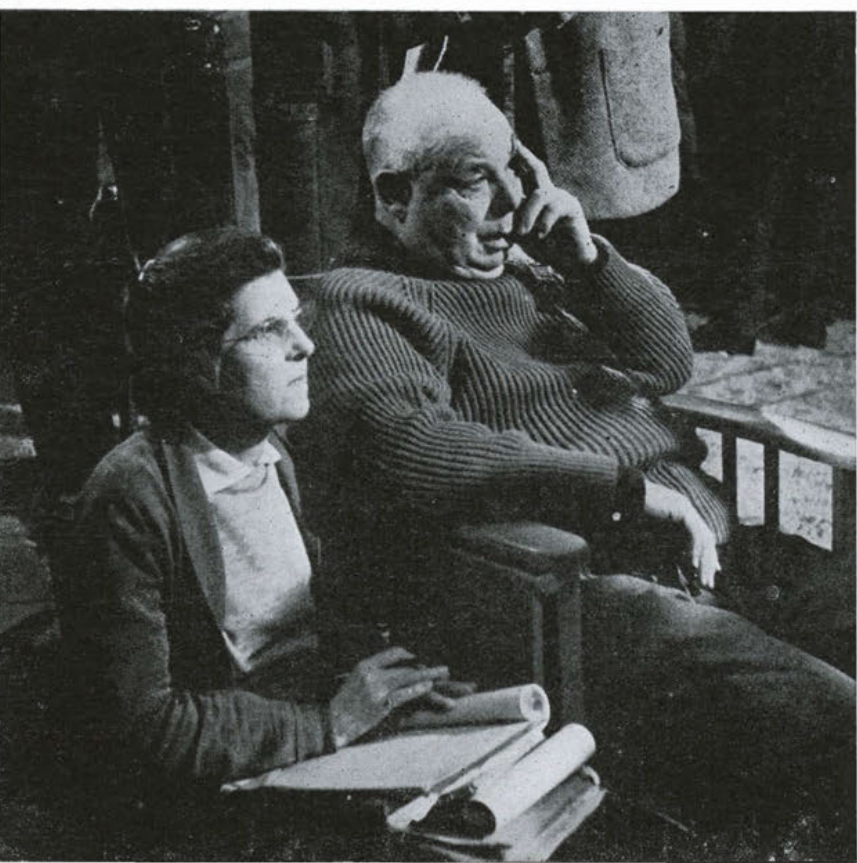
Broadway in *The Confidential Clerk*; certainly she was in London during the time she played in *Bell Book and Candle*. This was a comedy in which she was cast as a witch—and there was another, never brought to the West End, in which she changed into a cat. . . . And this, of course, is the alarming thing. Whenever she has been absent for some time, the element of fantastic speculation enters in and strange visions fill the mind; the actress may be holidaying on a broomstick, or relaxing as a lovely blue-point Siamese in some adoring, enslaved household, or, having simply played a Dunne-like trick of time upon herself, be enjoying a characteristic foray in some vanished elegant society. One knows she will come back, because she can obviously manage this kind of thing with ease. But one hopes it will be soon.

SOME OF JOAN GREENWOOD'S FILMS. 1941, *John Smith Wakes Up* (Jiri Weiss). 1943, *The Gentle Sex* (Leslie Howard). 1945, *Latin Quarter* (Vernon Sewell). 1946, *A Girl in a Million* (Francis Searle). 1947, *The Man Within* (Knowles), *The October Man* (Roy Baker). 1948, *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (Dearden and Relph), *Whisky Galore* (Mackendrick), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Hamer). 1949, *Bad Lord Byron* (Macdonald). 1950, *Flesh and Blood* (Kimmins), *Man in the White Suit* (Mackendrick). 1952, *Importance of Being Earnest* (Asquith), *Le Passe-Muraille* (Jean Boyer). 1954, *Knave of Hearts* (René Clément), *Father Brown* (Hamer). 1955, *Moonfleet* (Lang).



Elena

Jean Renoir's new film in Eastmancolour,
with photography by Claude Renoir and music by Kosma,
is a comedy of manners set in the
Paris of 1860. A Russian princess with a passion
for noble causes falls in love simultaneously
with an important, ambitious military man, and
an ordinary, unassuming one.





et les Hommes

Above left and right: Elena et les Hommes. Ingrid Bergman as the Princess Elena Sorovska, with her brilliant suitor (Jean Marais) and her modest one (Mel Ferrer). Left: Jean Renoir and his wife on the set. Right: Renoir (foreground, left) directs the 14th of July scene in which Elena and her lover dance with the crowd.





"The animal challenge . . ." Burt Lancaster and Anna Magnani in "The Rose Tattoo", William Holden and Kim Novak in "Picnic".

Film Reviews

THE ROSE TATTOO and PICNIC

A STRIKING feature of the postwar American theatre has been the "mood" play (Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Paul Osborn etc.); the first of these plays successfully framed their chosen world, enddistanced it, and set an authoritative tone for the interpretation. At their most successful, in *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Member of the Wedding*, these plays created a coarsened Chekov mood—or, more specifically, the mood that we in the West tend to expect of an evocative Chekov production and which the Russians strenuously deny as being its true intention: an indulgent, heart-tugging look at a part of the human situation, with all its little follies and sad strivings. All the same the mood was theatrically potent, the observation real and pointed enough to support it. But the cycle seems now to have run its course, and the truth which once embodied the mood has become a knowing formula. Lacking the true basis of experience, the elements of these imitations appear uncoordinated; on their own, the poetry seems trite, the wistfulness thin, the point of view unbeguilingly naive. A lack of form and control reflects the missing creative urge; and two new filmed plays, *The Rose Tattoo* (Paramount) and *Picnic* (Columbia) typify this state of affairs in their lack of discipline, of central commitment, and the

clever artiness substituted for genuine feeling.

In both cases the strongest surviving element, the cuckoo fattened in the decaying nest, is sexual fantasy. The character who erupts into the action and disturbs the *status quo*—the widow's heart-warming grief in *The Rose Tattoo*, the still, small-town contentment in *Picnic*—is an irresponsible, worthless, but physically disquieting and violent personality. His flamboyant sexuality is confronted by a society apparently organised to deny it. In *The Rose Tattoo* the Sicilian widow in the shabby Gulf Coast town has manufactured an ideal of perfect love—"beautiful, like a religion"—out of what was merely a perfect sex-life; happily imprisoned in her myth of the perfect husband, she has utterly blinded herself to his infidelities and limitations. So immaculate is her dream that his untimely death finds her quite unable to leave the clouds, and at the same time totally unaware of what elements her fantasy is really compounded. Time only deepens her dependence on the dream, sours her relationship with the life around her. No other man can approach her ideal, all other male intentions are dismissed as low and base. Thus her daughter's attempt to reconcile Serafina to her sailor beau (simple, lost and sweet) meets only suspicion and insult. Finally the widow herself submits again—to the potent sexual force of a stupid adventurer with a rose tattooed on his chest in imitation of the dead husband. The latter's revered ashes are dashed from their urn; and then, in calmer mood, Serafina unconditionally surrenders.

In *Picnic* a shiftless "good sort" drifts into the small-town community of a former college friend. Flexing his muscles in a lonely widow's garden, where he is earning his breakfast by sweeping out the yard stripped to the waist, he attracts the disturbed glances of his friend's girl who lives next door. By next morning his assertive sexuality has driven a wise-cracking spinster schoolmarm to claw his shirt to ribbons because of the maddening taunt he embodies, and also to cause his friend's girl to renounce her excellent match and join him in a penniless "on the run" existence in Tulsa. This conduct is backed by the author's wholehearted approval, by the background music and all but the crankier members of the cast. The deciding voice is (perhaps significantly) that of the plain teen-age sister who, though bookish, wretched

and with some nasty complexes, can still urge, "Go with him! For once in your life do something bright!" So a dry intellectual sanction is given to the flight into a final dangerous trap—dangerous, that is, to all except the small community for which marriage and an ordered family life play practically no part, which constructs its own moral code; but dangerous, one would certainly have thought, to the home-town girl nourished on precisely these principles of marriage, family and order. Off, however, she goes.

In both these films, then, surrender to the purely animal challenge, with no thought of any other compatibility, is offered as the panacea. At this point, it seems, all other emotional needs cease. The solution suggests that the element of fond fantasy has been allowed a destructive play quite out of keeping with the disciplined best work of these two authors, Tennessee Williams and William Inge. Williams has already embodied his masculine ideal once and for all in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In *The Rose Tattoo*, Burt Lancaster, in an energetic but impossibly un-Latin portrayal, lays bare the febrile unsubstantial dream. Neither in writing or performance is the character anything more than a static prototype. One resents as too personal, inartistic and facile the ultimate contention that man can live by bed alone; the exclusive championship of this cause can only appear as wistful and indulgent.

Artistically it is clear that personal fantasies are only valid as raw material; unobjectified, they are wooden and blinding to the artist. A clear artistic distance must be achieved to enlist them potently, realistically, in a work; otherwise they appear simply as obsessive straitjackets. The climactic scenes of *The Rose Tattoo* and *Picnic* are conceived in a private vacuum, with no reference to any observed, shared world. They generate a violent, clamorous semblance of life, but they have nothing of the artist's ordered reflection, of delight through discovery and recognition. And the softer simplicities of these substitute passions are hardest of all to take—the crinkly-haired tight-jeaned sailor and his unsullied saintly girl are crude simplifications of which a mature craftsman like Williams should be ashamed. Happily the evidence of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* indicates that he has now pulled himself clear.

Nevertheless, despite its central falseness, *The Rose Tattoo* is clearly the work of a superior craftsman, and the deficiencies of its narrative line are partially compensated for in the entertaining, sometimes deeply shrewd detail and incidental observation. Two scenes at least are brilliantly realised. When, after the long and careful build-up of the widow's obsessive grief, the adventurer is admitted to her parlour-cum-shrine, the reverent mood she attempts to impose is bluffly shattered—and a hearty parody of emotional over-indulgence and its furtive complications is promised. Unfortunately, the comment is shown up before long as only peripheral and glancing; a central identification with sentimental-animal yearning starts to wheeze and sprawl uncorsetted over the action. Much of it, of course, is subtly upheld. The widow is hopelessly withdrawn from contact with life—but the life around her is so universally repellent and dreary that her attitude is all too understandable. Is that partly the reason, then, for her attitude? How are we to judge her? What stand is being taken about her distress? Emphasis shifts repeatedly from her romantic grief to the coarse seducer, and rarely withdraws for an objective survey of the two of them. Cake is had and eaten, in fact, with greedy repetitiveness.

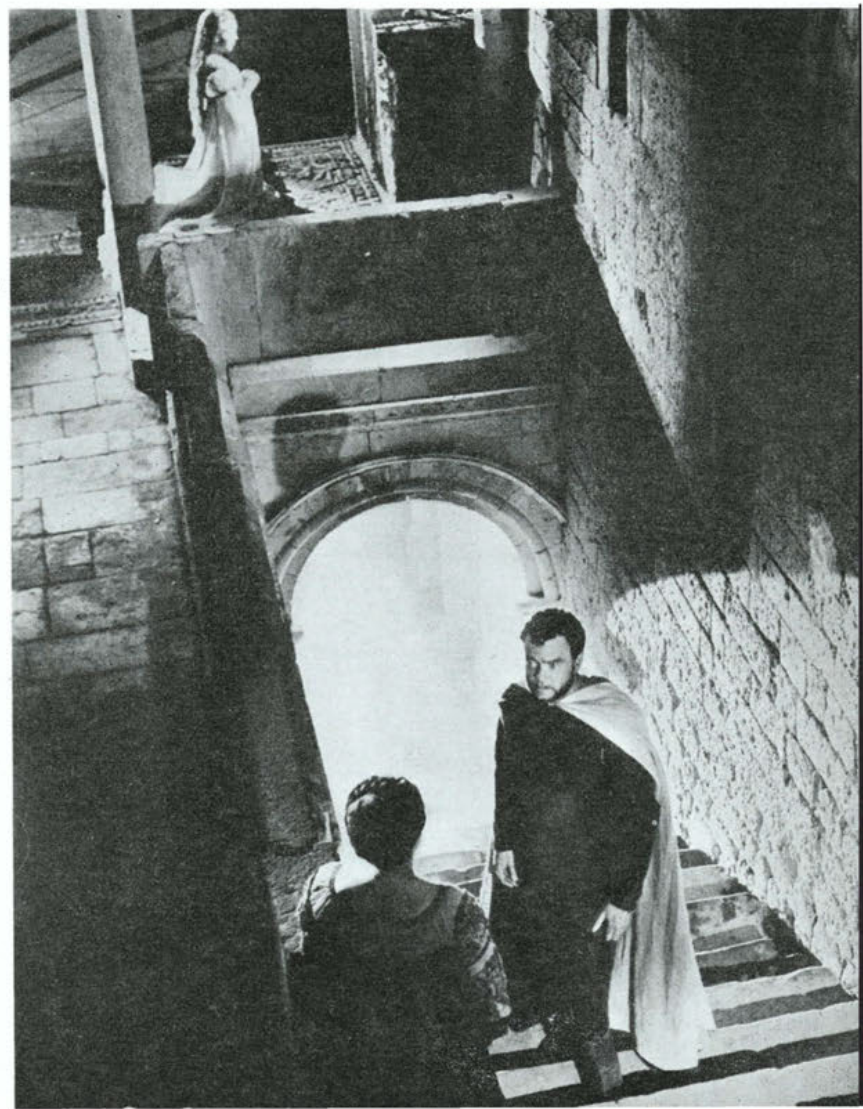
The second brilliant scene is the invasion of the widow's dedicated parlour by two vulgar ladies. Williams is by nature equipped with a searing eye for what constitutes the disgusting female; and Jo Van Fleet, with her incisive observation, equally competent to illustrate it. The scene is rapaciously caught, its authority is zestful.

There is, too, always the magnificent Anna Magnani. The scene in which she anticipates the news of her husband's death, before the neighbours can tell her, is superb; and so are countless other moments. But she is finally denied an interpretation of true stature by the uncertain script; one tends to enjoy, too detachedly, her flawless display of Italian mannerisms. The cunning of neither actress nor author—nor the sharp, sober talent of Daniel Mann, whose style of direction is well suited to the black-and-white VistaVision screen—can redeem the last hour of *The Rose Tattoo* from irritation and disappointment.

It is significant that the character intended to make the most unambiguous claim on our sympathies in *Picnic* emerges as the most odious of all. This is the kindly widow, to whom chance directs the hero a matter of minutes after his arrival by freight

train (before the credit titles) in the small town. After a couple of slices of good pie, she has bared his fine chest in the garden and set about washing his shirt. From then on, her dear old eyes have only to surprise an illicit kiss or a sexy dance to beam with wan pleasure. The film ends with her treacly quaver, "There was a man in the house and it seemed good." But the whole community of *Picnic* is shown in varying degree at the mercy of the undisguised sexuality in its midst. The sexuality, however, is embodied by a cruising, pathetically boastful good-for-nothing, incapable of securing any foothold in life. As a youngster he did time for stealing a motor-bike, because "I wanted to get so far away so fast that nobody could ever catch up with me." (This sexy intruder—like the truck-driver of *Rose Tattoo*, with his clownish love of "poetry"—is burdened with a moral and spiritual weight which snaps his brawny back.) The heroine, crowned as the local beauty queen at the picnic, is also discontented. She explains her capitulation to the handsome stranger with a "I'm so tired of being told I'm pretty." Her mother, to whom she has previously made the same plaint, has answered, "You puzzle me when you talk that way." But he understands, and this encourages her rejection of the rich, romantic boy-friend who loves her in his puzzled rich way. ("I want to find out something, I want to find out whether you're real in the moonlight.") Pains are taken to show the hero and heroine as not very bright intellectually. They have, it is inferred, their own different "rightness". Does this explain, then, their enraptured embarkation on a penniless, vague life in which everything is put right in bed? Then why the clever sister's endorsement of their flight? It is adduced as the voice of clear reason—not for their especial case, but for all who dare to face life's demands. Small-town American life is halfheartedly decried as stale and unprofitable, but the act of leaving it for an undefined life in a slightly larger town seems ineffectual, both as a solution and a dramatic climax.

The heroine's mother, it is hinted, has already blazed her daughter's disastrous trail (that is, married on an impetuous attraction) and lived to regret it. Can she, then, muster nothing stronger than her pale "There were so many things I wanted to tell her," as she watches her beloved daughter mount the bus to lust in Tulsa? It is hard to decide along which garden path we are being led. Perhaps the answer resides in the hero's justification



"Othello". Suzanne Cloutier, Fay Compton, Orson Welles.

of the theft of his friend's girl: "I've got to claim what's mine, or I'll be nothing for as long as I live." Who can say? Certain it is, however, that the kindly widow's final soft smile, backed by a swelling music-track, is meant to epitomise our own approval of whatever it is.

Both *The Rose Tattoo* and *Picnic* were big Broadway successes before being filmed. Their popularity suggests a wide endorsement, however unconscious, of their content; an attempt to define this, therefore, may not be idle. Both plays are by writers in the very front rank of American playwrights. If William Inge had not written *Come Back Little Sheba*, one might suspect *Picnic* of being merely a garbled highbrow fantasy, cunningly laced with sex for a decadent public. If any integrity of intention was there at the beginning, it has somehow hopelessly miscarried. Most of the dialogue is a wet, deceitful and pretentious substitute for depth. Characters and situations are frequently expressed on a level of the most lunatic firework fantasy, and the action (if such it may be called) is conceived as neurotic self-revelation lumbering after sensitivity. The hero pleads for a goodnight kiss and is refused. He: "Are you trying to punish me, Madge?" She (in tones of rapt discovery): "Yes—oh yes—I think I was trying to punish you. Oh, kiss me, Hal!" After the kiss—He: "You make me feel important—no! You make me feel patient." Again, the schoolmarm incessantly interprets life in terms of her manless future. "Look at that sunset, Henry—it's like the daylight didn't want to die, it's like the daylight was going to put up a big fight (she connects this with her own plight, and finishes huskily) to keep the night-time from creeping on. . ." Finally she gets her man (weak, pathetic, trapped) and leaves like an actress off to Reno, sticking her tongue out at the schoolhouse en route. This is surely terrible stuff, a fearful evasion of the task of presenting the situation in human terms.

Picnic is rather flatly directed by Joshua Logan, who also staged the play. He has envisaged its mood in terms of a dreamy wistfulness, which lies over the whole like a sauce and utterly compromises any vital rhythm. (He is not helped, incidentally, by the demands of the CinemaScope screen, which impose a size and heaviness alien to the material.) The actors, never led into the heart of situations, fall back on their own individual devices; the most successful is the honest, likeable talent of William Holden. Denied constructive guidance, he employs a conscientious and often illuminating "line-by-line" interpretation. Also dealing well with unenviable material is Susan Strasberg as the "difficult" teenager. The rest of the cast have a modest lack of impact, with the exception of Rosalind Russell as the schoolmarm. Coarsely observed, tastelessly over-stated, this is a lurid example of personality-selling.

The exception to the film's general falseness is the wordless dance scene, which forcefully illustrates the physical attraction that draws hero and heroine together. At this point, mutual desire is not burdened with the weight of problems, nor wearing the glow of a panacea. For once in the film, content and intention meet, agree, and completely succeed. Aware of each other, but separately swaying to the music at the picnic, the couple move closer to each other, join in a slow dance together, oblivious of everything else in a breathless, suspended world of their own. This, and an entertaining, observant but scrappy tour of sideshows and ceremonies at the Labor Day picnic, are almost the total joys of the film. There remain the excellent settings of Jo Mielziner, detailed, imaginative, and unostentatiously right.

DEREK PROUSE.

OTHELLO

ANY schoolboy Shakespearean or home movie-maker can fault this *Othello* (United Artists) in a dozen ways. Its narrative goes by such fits and starts that it is often hard to follow the story. The cutting of the text seems often merely perverse: key scenes are excised and minor ones inflated disproportionately. Identifications and explanations are forgotten; raw edges abound. The poetry of this most poetic play seems deliberately obscured, while the rough post-synching and the variable quality of the sound make the clearest voices at times unintelligible.

It is so easy to see these things. It is too easy to rejoice in our own fine discrimination in catching so considerable an artist as Welles tripping, to dismiss the film so hastily that we overlook the splendours of an exciting, frustrating interpretation of the tragedy.

It is frustrating because we see by flashes just how marvellous it might all have been. An example of the frustrations and the



"The Cobweb": meeting of the patients' self-government committee.

thrilling potentiality of Welles' treatment is his handling of the line, "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!" The rhythm of the line is utterly destroyed by the intrusion of an "O" before "my soul". Why? The explanation might be carelessness or insensitivity, were it not for the extreme care with which the line is interpreted visually. The words begin, and then the speaker's head appears in the bottom right-hand corner of a darkened screen. The camera moves, as the line is spoken, sideways and nearer, until the great tormented face fills the entire screen. The result is a vivid and compelling emphasis of the thought; and a revelation of the way the screen might be used to interpret the great tragedies. Constantly the visual and physical disposition of the characters reflects and emphasises their intellectual placing in the drama. The technique of the bed-time quarrel in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, for example, is perfectly suited to the counter-questions and cross-purposes of the last scene of *Othello*.

Visually the film is superb. It opens with a striking sequence showing the funeral cortège of Othello and his murdered wife. As the procession winds past the cliff-like walls of the fortress, to the accompaniment of a chorus of wailing, Iago, a strange, glowering figure, is twisted, unprotesting, into a terrible cage (we glimpse it often later in the film, waiting, empty) to be hauled up the fortress walls. This scene, set against a beautiful stormy sky, establishes an atmosphere which is consistent and unbroken to the end of the film, when the same sombre scene is repeated and concluded. Only rarely the search for the picturesque gets out of hand, as it does, for instance, in the absurd Harry Lime chase of Roderigo and Cassio through the sewers.

The severe abridgement of the play destroys the fine narrative of the original, and—perversely as it seems—several of the finest, and dramatically most important, scenes are omitted (the willow song, for example, and Othello's suicide speech). The effect of this version is to throw into strong relief the two main figures, to concentrate on Othello and Iago almost to the exclusion of the other characters. Welles' own Othello is magnificent in the grandeur and simplicity with which it is conceived. He is handsome and noble, and his nobility survives his most credulous gulling—in the scene of Cassio's rejection, for example. It is his magnificent simplicity, his freedom from any intellectual subtleties which gives complete conviction to his gullibility and complete tragic pathos to his fearful anger and murderous crime.

Iago, on the other hand, has been refined into a figure of impenetrable mystery. After the momentary revelation of the first line of the film (brought forward from the end of the first act), "I hate the Moor!" his motives are kept quite secret. The speech in which are glimpsed all the horrors of his own maniac jealousy is omitted, and from his first "I am what I am!" to his final defiant "Demand me nothing! What you know you know" his ways are quite impalpable. He glides about, constantly busy, curious, painstaking about his evil. His sinister figure is scarcely once absent from the screen. Even in the most intimate scenes between the Moor and Desdemona, a sudden movement will reveal Iago slipping from a gallery or behind a pillar. Michael MacLiammoir's interpretation is as exciting and novel as the conception. With his restless busyness, his drawn, unsmiling, woman's mouth and its absurd pencilling of whisker, he is a melodious, methodical evil angel to Othello.

The other characters keep their secondary places. Suzanne Cloutier would have been inadequate to a more positive Desdemona; Michael Lawrence is a colourless Cassio. Fay Compton is unexpectedly versatile and moving as the coarse, pathetic Emilia. Only the role of Roderigo has been surprisingly and not happily promoted in importance. The gull's scenes are played up out of all proportion to their tedious and subsidiary importance. The best of them—the wonderful scene of darkness and confusion when Cassio is attacked and Roderigo killed—loses all its interest by being transferred to a well-lit Turkish bath.

Welles brings to *Othello* all his own rich visual invention and his fertile intelligence—unrestrained by too nice formalities of taste—to suggest, even in flashes, the rich potential of the cinema for interpreting the great tragedies. This flawed and faulty film is infinitely more vital, stirring, invigorating, than half-a-dozen more reverent, pedantically impeccable attempts.

DAVID ROBINSON.

THE COBWEB

THE problem in *The Cobweb* (M.G.M.) is to discover the makers' attitude towards their subject. William Gibson's novel is a sophisticated, mannered, almost too intelligent account of a few days at a private mental clinic during which an ostensibly trivial incident—the choice of new curtains for the library—reveals as many neuroses in the doctors as in the patients. Devereux, the head of the clinic, a tired and weak man who finds control slipping away from him, is more preoccupied with casual seductions than with the reality of his patients' lives; the real head is McIver, dedicated and imaginative, who believes in the therapeutic value of responsibility and for this reason has initiated a patients' self-government committee. But he too is struggling with personal problems, an estrangement from his shallow, pleasure-loving wife, an attraction to Meg Rinehart, the patients' activities director. . . . Into the cobweb spun by the affair of the "drapes"—Mrs. Regina Mitchell-Smith, Karen McIver's friend and one of the clinic's busiest trustees, wants to donate an expensive multifloral chintz, Miss Inch, an eccentric and formidable senior member of the staff, believes in economy and is all for plain cotton faille—is drawn a violent, suicidally inclined young patient, Stevie; for McIver and Meg Rinehart have conceived the idea that the patients themselves shall make the curtains, printing Stevie's designs on muslin, and this has been eagerly adopted at a committee meeting. Personal tensions cause different members of the staff to support Mrs. Mitchell-Smith, Miss Inch or McIver, but only the latter is at first aware of the importance of the issue to Stevie, who has responded to the scheme and will feel betrayed, will revert to sullen hostility, if multifloral chintz or cotton faille win the day.

There are two central situations here: the idea of the "drapes" intensifying antagonisms and creating unexpected alliances in the clinic, the study of the disturbed young artist who, to his danger, becomes trapped in an intrigue beyond his grasp. In the novel, interest is distributed evenly over the whole complex of personal relationships, and Stevie, unwittingly at the centre of them, never receives enough emphasis to stand out in clear relief. As a result the story lacks a dynamic inner motive, and though most of the characters are shrewdly drawn, brought alive with insistent physical detail, related to a background (rooms, cars, furniture, food, habits of dressing and undressing, of ablution and even cigarette-lighting) that is catalogued with precision, though the dialogue is often brilliantly idiomatic, the final impression is at once rather diffuse and rather thin.

In adapting the novel, John Paxton has not faced this structural problem; the general proportions are the same, the predicament of Stevie, in reality more urgent than the others', is not heightened. There are a few simplifications and modifications in themselves not damaging, except at the end, and much of the original dialogue is preserved. The film is directed by Vincente Minnelli and produced by John Houseman, at first sight a promising choice, since Houseman, as producer of *The Bad and the Beautiful* and *Executive Suite*, has previously shown himself interested in penetrating a closed professional world, its rivalries and feverish self-awareness, and the subject would also appear suited to Minnelli's talent for idiosyncratic character observation, for the casual psychopathology of everyday life.

Yet the film remains tentative, uncommitted. Apart from the cheated ending—McIver makes a speech about the necessity of doctors setting an example to patients by the honesty of their own lives, when he is just about to be wholly dishonest and evasive

himself, by renouncing his love for Meg Rinehart and accepting an implausible reconciliation with his wife—there is nothing blatantly false; some individual scenes, indeed, are notably well handled and played, some of the characterisations are excellent; only the total response is lacking. Where the novel is mannered in its deliberate mixture of styles (minutely naturalistic dialogue, alternation of colloquial narrative and intense interior monologue, of factual detail and impressionism), the film adopts a single mannered tone: cool, barbed, elegant, constructing a formal pattern from the self-display of egocentrics locked in a private world. In this way it makes no distinction between the really agonised dilemma (of Stevie) and the outbreaks of self-indulgence (of Devereux and Karen McIver), treating both from the same distance. One waits for the comment on a world so preoccupied with all kinds of neuroses that its sense of proportion is awry, but it never emerges. Most revealing, perhaps, are the background sketches of other inmates, designed for sophisticated effect, definitely theatrical and withdrawing.

The best things in the film are the portrait of McIver, given real strength in Richard Widmark's acute, honest performance, naturally dominating the story as the only character really capable of looking outside himself, and some of the scenes between him and Meg Rinehart, also excellently played by Lauren Bacall. Although in appearance over-groomed, so that the point of contrast with Karen McIver is blurred, she and Widmark give emotional truth to this relationship, and Minnelli handles it in his best, intimate, deftly observant style. (A pity that it is finally negated by the manufactured scene of renunciation at the end.) Gloria Grahame's Karen McIver has a brilliant first scene, a telephone conversation in which the character's narcissism and sexual discontent are ironically exposed, and never equals it later; Lillian Gish's Miss Inch, daemonic and bewigged, has a grotesque power; and there are isolated moments that show off Minnelli's flair for the "feel" of a scene—the wordless episode of Stevie taking Sue Brett, the girl frightened of crowds, to the cinema, the quarrel at night between McIver and his wife, he framed in shadow in a chair (one of the most ingeniously composed CinemaScope close shots yet seen), she standing in the doorway with the light behind her, and the angry interview between McIver and Miss Inch in which the wig-rest in the foreground constantly points the spinster's unease (she has been caught with it off, but saved by a close-fitting "housework-cap").

As Devereux, Charles Boyer disappoints; his performance is strained and superficial, and the character seems almost otiose. It is not, however, the fault of John Kerr, clearly a talented young player, if the figure of Stevie never comes close enough. For the ultimate lack of development in the whole film, its failure—in spite of a good deal of intelligence and surface conviction—to impose real progression and a human continuity on the complex of episodes, is summed up by the ending. "The trouble was over," a title reads. But the novel's last sentence is: "The trouble was over, the trouble was begun."

GAVIN LAMBERT.

"Killer's Kiss". Jamie Smith and Irene Kane.



KILLER'S KISS

THE young writer-director-photographer-editor of this unpromisingly titled film has a good deal of talent. He made *Killer's Kiss* a year or so ago in New York—on location and in a small studio—and later sold it to United Artists for distribution. He has now directed his first Hollywood film, a melodrama called (also unpromisingly) *Bed of Fear*.

Killer's Kiss is Stanley Kubrick's second film, the first being *Fear and Desire*, also independently made, a violent, unpersuasive though evidently sincere anti-war story somewhat influenced by *A Walk in the Sun*. The difference between first and second film is striking; although *Killer's Kiss* is a melodrama too full of familiar and not always skilful contrivances, it has a simplicity of outline, an atmospheric power, a directness in its characterisation, that suggests a maturing and distinctive personality. The story really only concerns three people: Davy, a young boxer who falls in love with Gloria, a dance-hall hostess, and her lover and employer, an unappetising petty crook who becomes savagely jealous when she leaves him, unsuccessfully attempts to set his thugs on Davy, then kidnaps Gloria, and is finally brought to justice after a rooftop chase. Kubrick chose the thriller form, one guesses, partly for commercial reasons, as an acceptable popular form within which to experiment, and partly because its reliance on action minimises the need for dialogue (the film is post-synchronised, on the whole very well). In fact, the melodrama is the least successful, most derivative aspect of the film; its real originality lies in its approach to characterisation and atmosphere.

The young couple created by Jamie Smith and Irene Kane have a modest, attractive naturalness; and Frank Silvera makes a disturbing figure of the rejected lover, vain, gross, ingratiatingly possessive, with a taste (it is hinted) for *recherché* sexual practices. These three characters are placed against a New York background which comes alive with a subtle, unexpected force. The camera style is refreshingly free, and in the dance hall sequence it is not only the sardonically glimpsed hostesses and their partners but a series of vivid, casually related images—signs, advertisements, objects—that create the *milieu*. Again, there is a scene in which Davy first makes love to Gloria, and the simple little room, the early morning view of the city through the windows, become part of the situation; there is something genuinely "lived" about it. Best of all is the sequence in which Davy, sitting dejected in his darkened room after losing a fight, watches Gloria come in across the courtyard, sees her prepare lazily, tiredly for bed. Little happens, but the most ordinary actions become suggestive and interesting; the episode crystallises what seems to be the director's most remarkable talent—a kind of neo-realist approach to human behaviour, a feeling for the place and the moment, the apparently trivial or commonplace which yields up dramatic meaning. Kubrick has not only the observer's eye to see this, but the photographer's skill to record it. Lighting and composition, with their bold yet un-glossy texture, contribute to the personal impact.

By contrast the action sequences seem not only derivative but dramatically less strong. The attack on Davy's manager in the deserted yard at night reminds one too directly of *The Set-Up*, and the rooftop chase, apart from recalling *The Naked City*, fails to excite. One would be tempted to say that all this represents something more theoretical, obligatory, for the director, were there not some explosions of physical violence that seem personally characteristic, and also a restlessness, an occasional jaggedness, that contribute to the film's inner tension. At its most obvious and questionable this results in female models being weirdly truncated during the fight in the warehouse; the diversion with the two drunken conventioners in the street, though, is a curious and effective touch. But when Gloria relates the story of her early life (which includes a starkly Freudian relationship with her father), and of her sister who became a dancer, Kubrick illustrates this simply by a series of shots of the dancer (Ruth Sobotka) performing on an empty stage, and the evocative lighting, the dancing and the choreography (by David Vaughan) are in themselves too interesting for one to be able to absorb what is being narrated on the soundtrack—apart from the irrelevance of the images for most of the time. All the same, this is the reverse side of the freedom, the experimentation, that runs through much of the film and affirms that its maker has a talent to watch.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

IN BRIEF

1984. (A.B. Pathé). The final sentence of Orwell's novel—"He loved Big Brother"—does more than state the tragedy of Winston Smith; it expresses the real horror of Oceania. Michael Anderson's film ends with Winston screaming "Down with Big Brother" as he is killed by the Thought Police. Julia dies loyally by his side, stretching to touch his hand. . .

A credit title points out that the film has been "freely adapted" from Orwell's original. Apart from the monstrous reversal of the conclusion, the screenplay by William Templeton and Ralph Bettinson remains close to the novel in incident and plot, although both adaptation and treatment are superficial. Rudolph Cartier's celebrated television production of 1984 established a sense of a living, suffering community; but here the action is set in an unconvincing world, half cheap science-fiction and half studio slum. The characters seem so rootless that they scarcely begin to engage our sympathies. The intense freedom of the love scenes, for instance, is never communicated, and even the torture sequences lack impact. Occasionally something of Orwell's power seeps into the film, most notably in the rhythmically cut passage of the "two-minute Hate"; but the direction as a whole displays a disappointing tendency to dwell on futuristic sets and gadgets while remaining almost detached from the characters.

The miscasting of Edmond O'Brien and a tentatively deglamorized Jan Sterling (although made in Britain, the film is American-financed) is even more disastrous. Accomplished actor though he is, O'Brien cannot disguise his incongruity with Winston, the wretched rebel of the original; and Jan Sterling's attempt at Julia lacks passion and individuality. (The inevitable comparison with the vivid television performances of Peter Cushing and Yvonne Mitchell makes both players appear still more colourless.) Michael Redgrave gives O'Connor (the O'Brien of the novel) an appropriate kind of ambiguous force, though he maintains rather too great an aloofness.—DEREK HILL.

THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS (Fox). In 1943, the Allies wished to deceive the Axis powers into expecting the invasion of Europe to come through Greece instead of Sicily. A scheme, "Operation Mincemeat," was conceived, in which a corpse—fully dressed and documented as a Royal Marine major, and carrying apparently authentic papers referring to the invasion—was washed ashore at a Spanish coastal town, where it was known that a German agent would pass the information on to his High Command. This central situation is bizarre and dramatically strong; and although *The Man who Never Was* belongs to the present trend of British films dealing with authentic wartime schemes and exploits (*Cockleshell Heroes*, *The Dam Busters*, etc.), the idea of duping the enemy with a falsified corpse is intriguingly cold-blooded, and totally opposed to the native tradition of what is and what is not cricket.

Unfortunately, although director (Ronald Neame) and writer (Nigel Balchin) have approached the subject with sober respect, the overall tone grates. Familiar stereotypes; a little too much "box-office" improbability and the subplot of the loves of Gloria Grahame, wildly out of time and place as an American librarian who becomes involved; and the cold narrative of the actual event, with actors impersonating the Service chiefs who approved the scheme, including General Nye and Admiral Mountbatten—all these refuse to combine into an acceptable whole. Clifton Webb's complacent performance (discreetly bearded) is unsympathetic, and does not help matters either. By far the best section is the film's second half, in which the Germans send an agent to London to check on the validity of the dead major. Stephen Boyd excellently suggests the smiling, ingratiating, suspicious spy, and the tempo and handling of this episode is more assured and firm than the rest. Technically the film (CinemaScope: Eastmancolor) is efficient, but in general one regrets the lack of imagination brought to a promising subject.—JOHN CUTTS.

PRIVATE'S PROGRESS (British Lion). "The film THEY didn't want made" suggests that THEY lacked less a sense of humour than a sense of proportion. For John Boulting's good-natured comedy of an undergraduate called up early in the war, who is absolutely no good at all but, through an influential Brigadier uncle, gets a commission and sees a bit of action—he joins a special expedition sent to capture art treasures in Germany, the profits



Disney's "The African Lion": sleepy lions after a meal.

from which will later be divided between the Brigadier and some War Office colleagues—is too mild, even too affectionate, for satire. Some of it amuses; none of it cuts deep. Since there are no references to the reality of war, the point of the jokes—mainly the class-conscious, corrupt officer world and the routine of training—is blurred; and the hero is not a true innocent, but, as presented by Ian Carmichael, a kind of sophisticated intimate revue butt, lacking any moral force. So, with no point of reference outside itself, the story proceeds on the level of amiable farce, and one's degree of enjoyment depends on the number of times one has heard these jokes about the army before. And the would-be cynical ending, with its gesture of defiant goodwill towards "those who got away with it" is only half-hearted, really just a complacent wink at the fact that life is rather a racket, not grave enough to be cynical nor flippant enough to be bitter.—GAVIN LAMBERT.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM (United Artists). Saul Bass's credit titles are as brilliant as one might expect after *Carmen Jones*, but this is an unattractive film: not because the subject is painful, but because the director, Otto Preminger, with his thorough skill, shows himself so profoundly insensitive to its pain. The drug addiction scenes are announced by jazz music on the soundtrack, the climactic agony—Frankie Machine writhing on a bedroom floor as he tries to pass the hours without recourse to a hypodermic—is the cue for some orgiastic crescendoes. It is not perhaps as crude as it sounds, because the controlling hand is superficially persuasive, if a little ponderous; but the lack of compassion, the willingness with which humiliation is exploited, speak for themselves. The American backgrounds undergo a weird Central European sophistication, slightly raffish and theatrical, something like Fritz Lang but without his curious force; there is an absurd subplot about Frankie's wife, a self-pitying cripple who can really walk quite all right all the time, and in Eleanor Parker's performance the character becomes almost surrealist. Frank Sinatra, however, is impressive, and his honesty is another reason for wishing for an honest film.—JAMES MORGAN.

CINERAMA HOLIDAY. The second Cinerama programme is based on the theme of "The Adventure of Four Young Lovers", the adventure being that of travel. A newly-married pair from Switzerland visit America, a Kansas City couple go off to Europe. Visits are paid to St. Moritz for the bob-sleigh run, Davos for skiing, Paris for nightclubs and High Mass at Notre Dame, Las Vegas for the gambling spots, New Orleans for jazz, California for a railroad trip, and the deck of an aircraft carrier for scenes of U.S. Navy jet aircraft in action.

Two elements have been lost since *This is Cinerama* appeared. The novelty of seeing a small screen suddenly expand into a vast panorama can only happen once, and the transition here from shots of a Swissair plane to a view of the Alps gives a feeble, almost anticipated thrill as against the sudden impact of the roller-coaster sequence in the original programme. Also, the attempt at a continuity link by means of the two couples has produced a very scrappy effect. Only the jet aircraft sequence is given a reasonably detailed treatment; for the rest, there are quick glimpses which whet but do not satisfy the appetite. The best moments are the jazz funeral in New Orleans, Oscar Celestine singing and playing *Tiger Rag* with the original Tuxedo Dixieland Jazz Band, moving camera scenes on the ski runs, and a set of outboard shots from the California Zephyr railroad sequence. The short dialogue interludes between the American couple are clumsy and embarrassing, and the Notre Dame material is also uncomfortably self-conscious, though there is a charming moment when an erring choirboy gets smacked on the head for inattention to Couperin.

Technically this second programme introduces no major changes. The attempts at narrative are so timid as to be virtually non-existent. Close-ups are used freely and to good effect. There are no demonstrations of the impressive three-panel cross-cutting which was a feature of the water-skiing finale in *This is Cinerama*. The "float" between the panels seems neither more nor less than before, and the sound system is still the finest in existence—though it is also very, very loud. The high-frequency scream of the jet aircraft is almost unbearably realistic, and the orchestra might be behind the screen throughout the programme, three hundred strong.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

Television

THE year opened with a storm of rivalry and recrimination from which ITV emerged more battered than the BBC. After the publication of ITA's first Annual Report began the battle of statistics, which eventually destroyed all faith in figures, and culminated in the publication by ARTV of a triumphant half-page advertisement in *The Times*, proclaiming, as it appeared, the utter rejection of the BBC's claims upon any audience. The spirit of the next bout was represented by Sir George Barnes' dry statement: "The audience figures which have been bandied about are not a criterion of excellence". A series of three shrewd articles in *The Times* (January 11, 12, 13) began with some sharp notes on the over-precipitate launching of the new service, and went on, in an article headed "Lightest of the Light Industries" to criticise the policies of the programme contractors, speaking of "the unrewarding search . . . for something, other than 'Free Speech' perhaps, that starts the mind or quickens the emotions". ITN, the news organisation financed by the programme contractors had, said *The Times*, "been under challenge behind the scenes". Mr. Aidan Crawley, the editor-in-chief, believed that his news service cost only about one-third of the comparable BBC service, but "theatre men who see no particular virtue in news and film men who are used to the slower processes of film newsreels, find the expense hard to bear".

The day after this article appeared, its suggestions were confirmed by the announcement of Aidan Crawley's resignation. He was reported as saying, "The main reason for my resignation . . . is my conviction that a board composed of representatives of contractors who differ so widely in their outlook towards television is incapable of maintaining a consistent policy towards the news". The following day the resignation of Mr. Crawley's assistant editor, Richard Gould-Adams, was announced. He gave as his reason "The inadequate role allotted to the news company". *The Times*' Special Correspondent now wrote:—

It would be unfair to imply that Mr. Crawley was at issue with all members of ITN board, but there are on the board men whose whole experience has been in entertainment and who have scant regard for news as such in a television service. . . .

It is not surprising that some of those who were drawn into commercial television to organise what are now damned as "minority" features are going through the harsh winter of discontent. But that is not to say the light entertainment staffs are depressed. They, at any rate, are in wonderful fettle.

Criticisms of ITV policies multiplied until Sir Robert Fraser was stirred to address to *The Times* "An Analysis of Television", in which—advancing, in his own words, "from violent generalisations . . . to the civilised business of taking a quiet look at the facts"—he offered a spirited statistical defence of ITV's serious mind. His letter ended, nevertheless, with the considerable admission that in two groups of programmes, the BBC's range was the more extensive. The groups proved to be rather large:

The first is in outside non-sporting broadcasts, in which for technical reasons we are still relatively weak. Secondly, there are occasional classical plays, and general "features" or social documentaries about animals, travel, books, personal problems and especially social problems, the BBC's standard in the last of these being quite outside our present reach.

In subsequent issues of *The Times* Sir Robert's "quiet look at the facts" was variously challenged; by a statistician, for instance:

In the opinion of some statisticians who have a practical concern with the measurement of television audiences, an unqualified acceptance of all the figures Sir Robert quotes is not recommended.

and by a television dealer, who wrote:

The ITA ought to be congratulated on having so able a director, who can make an inferior service appear acceptable, but the fact remains that any impartial viewer cannot fail to notice the lowering of standards inaugurated by the ITA. There is also disturbing evidence that some of the better ITA programmes are being dropped, curtailed or relegated to the late evening. It is dawning on the more serious-minded viewer that he is not being offered an alternative programme worth looking at.

Since this, the criticisms have abated somewhat, mollified no doubt by such happy items of news as the announcement that *People Are Funny* would not be seen after March. (Earlier *The Times*, commenting on ITA's increasing exercise of its authority, had noted: "One gathers that viewers are unlikely to see any more private homes invaded, or to see a boy winning laughs by begging in the streets bearing a notice that he is an orphan".)



On the whole the first stimulus of competition seems to have died down somewhat too, and the two services have settled down to their own steady patterns. ITV's news and documentary service—unembarrassed by the niceties of taste that often restrain the BBC—can offer exciting or provoking titbits like a tape-recording of the voice of the escaped prisoner, Alfred George Hinds, or scenes of a brawl with officious police at Smithfield. On the other hand it can offer nothing to equal the BBC's *Panorama* and *Special Enquiry*, with their pertinent and invigorating commentaries on current problems and affairs. The best recent *Special Enquiry* was *A Nation's Health*, which included interviews with a harassed, dragged mother who wanted nothing to do with health services, which she considered immoral, and with a tousleheaded strange old lady of Salford.

Of the new features, one of the most successful is ITA's *Jack Solomon's Scrapbook*; the great interest of the amiable old promoter's films and reminiscences is quite unexpected. BBC's *This Is Your Life* began inauspiciously, but is now handled with superb taste and skill by Eamonn Andrews. The presentation of variety follows its old uninspired ways unchanged; while the most unfortunate recent purchase of American job-lots is the disagreeable anti-Communist series *I Lived Three Lives*. ITV's *By An African Camp Fire* (British-made) is only slightly less distasteful.



There are adventurers in television, though. The BBC commissioned Arthur Benjamin to write an opera, *Manana*, with libretto by Caryl Brahms; and Tony Richardson produced a lively *Othello*, with Gordon Heath in the title role. In the event, both were "conceived in terms of television" with all the determination an ADC *enfant terrible* given his first fling might have shown; but the determination was in the right cause. A more genuine and *avant-garde* contribution to the medium was the first edition of *Idiot Weekly*, Price 2d. All the chances were against the success of transferring the Goon style to the screen; but the attempt did succeed in a brilliant-hit and near-miss way, which made this seem the shortest television programme in months. The items—all marvellously realised pictorially—ranged from an underwater violin performance to a surrealist interview between Fred Nurk and his son's headmaster, which terminated when they fell into each other's arms in a graceful waltz. A fake commercial for Footo the Patent Boot Exploder seemed the final comment on TV commercials. Most delectably anarchic of all, a well-known and attractive singer sang a popular hit with no particular distinction except that at the last note of her song, a drippy custard-pie smacked fair and square in her face and stayed there throughout the subsequent interview, which was conducted on the most conventional lines and made no reference to her plight. Such moments give hope for television's future.

DAVID ROBINSON

THE EIGHTH ART

"Commercial TV has brought something new to English television—money"—Bob Hope in *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*.

"As television must always be interesting, and as I am regarded as an 'interesting personality', what I'd love to do is have the camera just follow me around."—Lady Docker in *TV Times*.



"The Big Family". Grandfather Zhurbin (Sergei Lukyanov) and grandson.

BETWEEN THE ACTS

by John Gillett

THE varied creative phases through which the Soviet cinema has passed since the great revolutionary and aesthetic achievements of the silent twenties have invariably been paralleled by the changing intellectual climate of the nation. In the silent period, during a period of enthusiastic, not always co-ordinated social development, aesthetic experiment was at its height. Not only were the styles of the three dominating figures, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko, sharply differentiated, but the many interesting other figures—Vertov and his 'Kino-Eye' passion for reportage, Trauberg and the allegorical melodrama of *The Blue Express*, Boris Barnet and Alexander Room with their intimate satirical comedies, *The Girl with the Hat Box* and *Bed and Sofa*, Kuleshov who passed from semi-abstract experiments which laid the foundations of montage to the masterly psychological tensions of *Dura Lex*—all this reflected an extraordinary richness of creative activity. By 1928, however, the stabilisation of the social order demanded its equivalent in the arts. (*October* was found to be too formalistic and obscure for mass audiences, and withdrawn.) The year of the first Five Year Plan was also the year in which the concept of socialist realism and the "positive" hero was developed, and the interpretation of "reality, past or present, in the light of socialist ideology," as Catherine de la Roche defines it in

"Soviet Cinema," became the official course. In the years that followed, even the three great masters were to find difficulties in adapting their styles to simpler, more austere demands; and Vassiliev's direct, tightly constructed *Chapayev* (1934), the most successful film of its time, and Donskoi's magnificent, rough-hewn *Maxim Gorky* trilogy a few years later showed how far the pendulum had swung.

After this, the material upheavals caused by the Second World War, the bitter controversy over the second part of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, and the inauguration of the Cold War were hardly auspicious auguries for the future. A stern bureaucratic control over production became apparent, party meetings were held during which the tenets of socialist realism were more rigidly reaffirmed, and "individualism" and formalism (in all the arts) severely attacked. This doctrinaire policy made itself felt in the production of many lengthy, pedestrian biographical dramas, based on the lives of musicians, writers and scientists (all textbook "positive" heroes), determinedly hearty collective farm comedies and huge, dehumanised war reconstructions (*The Battle of Stalingrad*, *The Fall of Berlin*, etc.). The output of even the greatest names was noticeably affected. The only major works of Dovzhenko and Donskoi during this period (*Michurin* and *The Village Teacher*) contained passages of



Postwar reunion of husband and unfaithful wife: Pudovkin's last film, "The Return of Vassili Bortnikov".

genuine poetic feeling, but were decidedly inferior to their pre-war achievements. Pudovkin's painfully dull biography of the aviation pioneer *Zhukovsky*, was probably the worst film he ever made, and his last work, *The Return of Vassili Bortnikov*, failed to live up to the promise of its characteristic, vividly handled opening. During these years, however, if personal style was increasingly submerged by schematic demands, technical standards were maintained—the battle scenes in the war films, for example, were staged with impressive breadth and grasp; and the Agfacolor system was successfully developed, notably in the recording of exterior scenes, Pudovkin's last film being especially remarkable for these.

2

It was obviously only a matter of time before the apparent absence of new young writers and directors of talent was noted by Western critics and Soviet film-makers themselves. The recent encouraging renewal of creative activity in Soviet films after the ten uncertain years following 1945 (a period darkened by the deaths of Eisenstein and Pudovkin) will in fact be illustrated by a forthcoming season at the National Film Theatre, when several important new works will be introduced to British audiences. Some of the most revealing comments on the changing climate of the past two years can be found in a long article by Mikhail Romm (director of the two pre-war biographies of Lenin), which appeared in *Iskusstvo Kino* in 1954 and was reprinted by the Society for Cultural Relations in their bulletin.

Romm is mainly concerned with the necessity of reorganising and developing the script departments within the major studios, and directs a scathing attack at the numerous official committees and Art Councils set up to consider new work:

"The overwhelming majority of the comments received by the scriptwriter arise as the result of an individual taste and approach to the work in question. We do not seem able to behave objectively and patiently towards a show of independent taste on the author's part. Astounding things are to be heard at an Art Council meeting. Sometimes some of the suggestions made differ radically from others, and the author is advised to 'think over and bear in mind everything that has been said.' It must be stated that to take everything into account in one's work is sometimes quite impossible and often detrimental."

Bureaucratic controls which hinder output are also described:

"We shall never be able to carry out a programme of 100 to 150 films annually if there exists organs or individuals through whose hands all this mass of material has to pass. If the director of the Central Cinema Administration is going to have to read all the scripts and see all the films, he will have no time to do anything else. We shall have to release about three films a week and put three a week into production if we intend producing 150 a year. We must not wait for life to give the lie to the centralised system of control that has grown up. This system must be decisively altered and simplified here and now."

Apart from these pleas for a more enlightened attitude towards writers and subject matter, Romm comments frankly on what he considers to have been the mistakes of the past:

"Unlike *Chapayev* and *Baltic Deputy*, the film biographies of composers, admirals and generals made in the past few years have, to get to the root of the matter, been divorced from the inner content of our life. I consider that the greatest misfortune of the last few years is not that we have made a lot of cinema biographies but that we have lost the profound revolutionary themes and the passion for the transformation of the consciousness of man. We have lost this in almost all our films. *Chapayev* was a historical biographical film, but it raised colossal, urgent and pressing problems in our everyday lives."

His comments on individual productions includes a stricture on *The Battle of Stalingrad* that might have originated from a Western source:

"In this film, the scriptwriter N. Virta and the producer V. Petrov 'forgot' a not unimportant hero who played a decisive role in the defence of Stalingrad—the people. Among the masses of generals, marshals and officers, the rank-and-file Russian soldier was overlooked."

3

One can only surmise the repercussions this article may have caused within the Soviet film industry. Certainly an examination of some recent films suggests that a broader, freer approach to human relationships is now possible, and there appears to be a willingness to allow promising young talent some freedom to experiment. The outstanding new name, Sergei Samsonov, a 27 year-old graduate of the Moscow Institute of Cinematography, and a pupil of Guerrassimov, was introduced to Europe at the Venice Festival in 1955, where *The Cicada* won a Silver Lion. This adaptation of a Chekov story, written and directed by Samsonov, is by far the most rewarding of the group of Chekov films made during 1954 and 1955 to celebrate the centenary of the writer's birth. It is the bitter little story of a light-headed, pleasure-loving woman married to a famous but unromantic doctor; she entertains a collection of fawning Petersburg artists and dilettantes and becomes involved in a disastrous affair with a fashionable painter. It is only upon the sudden death of her dedicated husband that she understands the essential emptiness, the rootless futility of her existence. Apart from creating an impeccable period background, beautifully observed and felt (the film is in Agfacolor, and the exteriors are again exquisite), Samsonov handles the narrative with a nicely judged subtlety and irony. He has caught the difficult tragi-comic Chekovian balance to perfection; the film is both sophisticated and touching. Three episodes in particular—the opening *soirée* with the artists, the tense, strained dinner party at which the husband is confronted by his wife's lover, and the closing sequence of his death (shot in sad, gaunt close-ups)—testify to a personal talent of already considerable maturity. The casting is almost faultless, and Ludmila Zelikovskaia as the wife, Sergei Bondarchuk as Dymov the husband, give performances of remarkable depth.

In contrast, *The Safety Match* is an enjoyable Chekovian joke at the expense of the pompous Tsarist police, rather too theatrical at times, but with an agreeable comic sense and, again, a firmly authentic period atmosphere. The absurd *dénouement* in which the "murdered" landowner is discovered to be the happily tippy prisoner of the Police

Captain's lovesick wife, is presented with the sharp, sophisticated irony favoured by Chekov and his contemporaries. Some subtly pointed humorous small-part playing effectively sustains the mood. The direction of K. Yudin is serviceable and competent, if a little deficient in pace.

The least successful of this group, I. Annensky's version of *The Anna Cross*, suffers from some indifferent direction and an unresponsive leading lady. Much glossy surface detail fails to compensate for the lack of real pathos; and Mikhail Romm, in the article previously quoted, criticises Annensky for altering the "idea-content" of Chekov's original, apart from detecting a fatally sentimental note in the characterisation. Although these comments are essentially political in tone (Romm also finds the film's moral very dubious, "the more so since the court and the official world are depicted in somewhat enticing colours"), his remarks on the great popularity of the film with the Soviet public are illuminating:

"The success of [this film] shows that the public, wanting art with emotional content, having been choked by films stuffed with dry didactics and picturing the formal aspects of the lives of the heroes of the past, will jump at any work of art which seems inspired and which deals with some of the human aspects of the spirit."

4

Other productions based on contemporary themes display a new and welcome concern with these "human aspects of the spirit," linking them (understandably) with the great schemes for industrial expansion now being undertaken in the Soviet Union. A typical example, *The Big Family* (directed by Joseph Heifitz, who made *Baltic Deputy*) is clearly a "transition" film. Adapted from a lengthy novel about a family of shipbuilders, "The Zhurbins" by Vsevolod Kochetov, it occasionally adopts a rather forced moralising tone, and the *bonhomie* of its comic scenes is sometimes over-emphatic; but what is interesting and important about the film is the genuine attempt to create believable, likeable characters who are faced with human problems common to both East and West. Serious personal conflicts are touched on (the fiancée of one of the sons is seduced and has an illegitimate child, the unhappy marriage of another couple is left unresolved), and there is no tendency to produce facile, formulaised solutions. There is an attractive warmth about this picture of the shipbuilding community, and a feeling for the human continuity of its traditions. Heifitz brings a fresh surface vitality to the narrative, and obtains some rich, lively playing from the large cast. Most notable are A. Batalov as one of the younger Zhurbins, and Sergei Lukyanov as Grandfather Zurbins, an indomitable old worker who accepts his relegation to the post of night porter with wry good humour.

An even more intimate analysis of personal relationships can be found in Raizman's new film, *Lesson of Life*, which concerns the marital difficulties of a young engineer and his neglected wife, who leaves him several times before a final reconciliation is reached. Personal attitudes towards work and domestic responsibilities are discussed, and the often heated scenes between husband and wife offer some intriguing glimpses of Soviet family life (the couple live in a small, well furnished flat, complete with maid). Significant also is the manner in which the human element is kept in the forefront of the narrative—the fiery industrial backgrounds are directly evoked but never emphasised. (Unfortunately I saw the film in an unsubtitled version, which involved missing many of the keenly argued ideological points raised by the personal conflict.) Visually the film is remarkable for some lightly textured, well matched colour, and for one invigorating burst of action. The much quoted episode in which the husband

suddenly leaves a works meeting, jumps on a lorry and pursues his wife to the harbour, is shot with superb virtuosity and makes a thrilling set-piece.

There appears to be a shortage of successful comedies on contemporary themes, and a recent example, *True Friends*, directed by M. Kalatozov, is hardly likely to win the approval of the highly sophisticated. Nevertheless, this story of three middle-aged friends who recall their boyhood days by taking a holiday on a raft and spend a good deal of time playing childish malicious pranks on each other, is imbued with a simple unaffected feeling of goodwill; and this side of the film is attractive. The satirical barbs directed at bureaucratic practices (one of the group, a bumptious Academician with an inflated opinion of himself, receives a lesson in self-discipline) are rather tiresomely overstressed, and a romantic episode receives disappointingly frigid treatment. This curious entertainment also includes a spectacular horse stampede, some beautifully photographed river locations and, most welcome, several pretty girls.

5

The secret, adventurous world of childhood, set against the pattern of a changing society, has always been a favourite theme with Soviet directors, and has inspired some of their finest work. There appear to be no modern equivalents of Ekk's or Donskoi's masterpieces, although a recent production, *Restless Youth* (directed by A. Alov and V. Nayumov), with its cast of children and adolescents, evokes in its early passages something of the mood of Legoshin's *Lone White Sail*. Set in the Ukraine during a period of revolutionary unrest in the 1920's and 30's, *Restless Youth* follows the adventures of a group of children, witnesses to the murder of a Bolshevik soldier, who in later life track down those responsible for the crime. The atmosphere of a regional town seething with political intrigue is swiftly established, although the impact of these fast moving early sequences (vividly photographed in black-and-white) gives way eventually to a more conventional plot development. The backgrounds, however, remain continually absorbing, and there are some unusually pointed social comments on the importance of love in a Communist society and the evils of bourgeois Western dancing styles.

The necessity of stressing an orthodox moral—in this case the importance of working hard at school—sometimes introduces a strained note into V. Eissimont's *Chums*, one of several contemporary stories of school life. Moralising apart, there is a wonderful warmth and gaiety in the playing of the children, aided by sympathetic direction which never permits any intrusion of precocious sentiment. The exuberance and purity of the children here remind one of *Chuk and Gek*, one of the most charming of all children's films, and



"The Cicada". Grasshopper (Ludmila Zeliovskaya) and artist lover (Vladimir Drusnikov).



"Chums".

memorable for the miraculously natural performances of its four year-old stars.

The final group of films to be considered here provide tantalising glimpses of the wealth of musical and theatrical talent available in Russia today. The plainly shot "record" films like *Gala Festival* and *Concert of Stars* made little attempt to shape their material into cinematic terms, but the recent feature-length version of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (previously reviewed in SIGHT AND SOUND) contains much that is exciting and spectacularly inventive. Made by Lev Arnstam (a director with an interesting past career) and L. Lavrovsky (one of the leading Bolshoi choreographers), the ballet was shot partly on location at Yalta in the Crimea, where an open-air Verona was constructed. The bitter feuding of the Montagues and Capulets and the carnival merrymaking are realised with irresistible verve, enhanced by some excellent colour—and, of course, the richly imaginative Prokofiev score. Much has been written of Ulanova's Juliet; here, in the ballet's more intimate moments, one is able to sense the full range of this great dancer's dramatic and lyrical power.

The plays of Shakespeare are currently enjoying a vogue among Soviet film-makers. Shortly before this article went to press, I was able to see Sergei Youtkevich's *Othello*, a rich and daring adaptation deserving of more detailed analysis than is possible here. Completely liberated from the confines of the stage, Shakespeare's "sea-port in Cyprus" is vividly re-created by a director whose visual imagination constantly supplements the words with a flow of exciting images which combine a wild flamboyancy with the rapt tenderness implicit in Shakespeare's original conception. The tightly edited text concentrates largely on the relationship between Othello and Iago (two splendid performances by Sergei Bondarchuk and Andrei Popov) and their scenes together possess a strange, elemental tension rarely stressed in Western productions. The unorthodox staging of key scenes (Othello and Iago swear their vengeance on a sea-shore to the accompaniment of surging waves, and the wonderful final tableau reveals the Moor as a crumpled, remorse-struck figure seated at the dead Desdemona's feet) convey an

emotional intensity infinitely more varied and subtle than was the case in Welles' intermittently brilliant, but determinedly virtuoso interpretation. Like Welles, Youtkevich employs a highly mobile camera style, usually for more valid dramatic purposes, and the Russian film has the advantage of some bold, expressive Agfacolor and beautiful costuming. Youtkevich's individual, carefully wrought approach to the play will inevitably arouse controversy (personally, I regretted some slight straining after effect here and there), although it seems likely that this *Othello* will defiantly influence any future attempts to ally Shakespeare with the cinema.

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It is usually unwise to predict the future development of any film industry (the Russian cinema is peculiarly impervious to any kind of prophecy); a consultation of Soviet film statistics, however, suggests that the present sharp rise in production, at least, is likely to continue. Whether the target of well over 100 films a year is advisable (or practicable) has yet to be proved—experience in other countries indicates that such a large output invariably involves a reduction in standards. Time will also show how the present marked trend towards a more personal control by directors over their material is allowed to develop. One can only hope that this new spirit will eventually encourage a talent as richly humane and mature as the Donskoi of the *Maxim Gorky* trilogy proved to be in the 1930's. In this way a film like *The Big Family* is an encouraging sign, for it is not without affinities to the spirit of Donskoi.

Political differences apart, the aesthetic curtain between East and West remains a formidable one. The hideous critical jargon employed by Communist writers is as alarming as some of the comments of irresponsible Western critics, who resolutely ignore the often valid social concepts advanced by Soviet film-makers. (Both *Lesson of Life* and *The Big Family* are remarkably interesting in their approach to relating personal life to professional work.) Personal contacts can obviously assist in ironing out these misunderstandings, especially when the official-sounding platitudes favoured by some visiting delegates are allowed to give way to more frankly intimate expressions of opinion. During a recent visit to Britain, Sergei Vassiliev (director of *Chapayev* and present artistic supervisor of Lenfilm Studios) spoke of a group of new young talents centred on Leningrad, some of them coming from the theatre, some from assistant direction on the floor, from whom much is to be expected; he also gave a brief survey of the current activities of some of his colleagues, which include the return of a number of personalities long absent from the Soviet cinema. Among these projects are a remake of Gorky's *Mother* by Donskoi; *Kakhovka*, a construction epic by Dovzhenko about the creation of an artificial sea in the Ukraine; a *Don Quixote* by Kosintzev (with Cherkassov, in CinemaScope); a new version of *The Road to Life*; another Shakespearean adaptation, *Twelfth Night*; and a comedy by Alexandrov about visitors to the U.S.S.R.

The true creative spirits of every age have often triumphed over the disadvantages of the moment, even when the moment seems long. One must hope to see history repeating itself once again.

Opposite: two moments from the first Iago-Othello "temptation" scene in Youtkevich's new film. Sergei Bondarchuk as Othello, Andrei Popov as Iago.



A LITTLE HISTORY OF BANNED FILMS

This chronologically arranged list of banned films in various countries over the last 30 years is not intended to be exhaustive. Many censorship boards are reluctant to disclose the titles of forbidden films—it is known, for example, that 61 films were banned in France between 1946 and 1951, but no list has ever been published. Also, a film banned by an official body—the British Board of Film Censors or the Motion Picture Association of America—may still be shown by special county or state licence, and of course gain increased audiences from notoriety. (This practice does not, however, apply in most European and Asiatic countries.)

Again, the bans have not always been permanent. Many Soviet films forbidden in England and France before World War 2 were resubmitted and passed after Russia became an ally; other films (*Joyless Street*, *Extase*, etc.) were in some cases resubmitted and, practically hacked to pieces, eventually passed. This being a list of banned films only, the hundreds that were never actually forbidden but snipped, distorted and variously carved up before approval was granted, are not included either. No information is available on practices in the U.S.S.R.—where, of course, very few foreign films are imported, and internal censorship operates at an official pre-production level.

Some of the bans remain baffling—Scandinavia's detestation of *Love from a Stranger* in any form, for instance, Mussolini's of Mickey Mouse, or Singapore's fear of *Madame X*; others yield themselves up after scrutiny—the Chinese disapproval of ghosts accounts for many of that country's vetoes, and perhaps Mussolini's rejection of the Marx Brothers sprang from *Duck Soup* . . . Others have obvious motivations of politics or "propriety" . . . At all events, the list, as a mirror of official attitudes, gives off some interesting reflections.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1925 | BRITAIN : <i>Entr'acte</i> .
U.S.A. : <i>Strike</i> . <i>Witchcraft Through the Ages</i> . |
| 1926 | FRANCE : <i>Potemkin</i> .
BRITAIN : <i>Menilmontant</i> . |
| 1927 | BRITAIN : <i>King of Kings</i> .
FRANCE : <i>Mare Nostrum</i> . |
| 1928 | FRANCE : <i>Les Nouveaux Messieurs</i> .
BRITAIN : <i>Dawn</i> . |
| 1929 | GERMANY : <i>Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</i> .
BRITAIN : <i>Mother</i> . <i>The New Babylon</i> . <i>Phantom of the Opera</i> .
FRANCE : <i>Mother</i> . <i>The New Babylon</i> . <i>October</i> .
CHINA : <i>Chinatown Nights</i> . |

The Small Knife

STUDIES IN CENSORSHIP

BRITAIN John Wilcox

PERHAPS the most striking fact you discover when you investigate the question of film censorship in this country is that, despite mankind's traditional dislike of censorship, almost everyone accepts the present position as quite reasonable. Yet alongside our much-vaunted Press freedom and official insistence on liberty for the individual, be he ever so under-privileged in other respects, exists a watch on what we are permitted to see in the cinema which, for conscientious attention to undesirable detail, would be hard to surpass. A.T.L. Watkins, Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors, is an urbane and alert apologist of film censorship. Although sniped at by Left-Wing and Liberal papers, written to by a variety of cranks and obliged to indulge in what, one imagines, must be rather unsavoury arguments with renters, he remains a dedicated crusader in the cause of not allowing the impressionable to be unfavourably impressed. On one side we have Mr. Watkins and his team of examiners, on the other the film-going public, and in between the film producers and distributors, the critics and the censor-critics. From this last group is occasionally heard a vague rumble of discontent, provoked usually by a comparatively spectacular decision on the censor's part, such as his refusal to grant a certificate to *The Wild One*. These disgruntled outbursts often betray ignorance of how film censorship works in this country and invariably peter out in submission to the *status quo*.

The British Board of Film Censors was formed in 1912 at the instigation of the film industry itself, which, with the appearance of a number of "blue" films, wished to guard against the possibility of trouble from the police. After the 1909 Cinematograph Act, local authorities were empowered to decide which films were to be allowed for public exhibition. The Board filled the need for a central body which could examine all films offered for public showing and so avoid the impracticability of each local authority examining each film. The Board itself has no legal authority, but its decisions are given legal sanction by the insertion of certain clauses in the licences issued to cinema proprietors. These state that the terms of the "U", "A" and "X" certificates must be observed. What it boils down to is this: the State accepts the principle of film censorship but delegates the authority for exercising it to the local councils, who in turn delegate it to the Board. Mr. Watkins describes this arrangement as a typically British form of compromise. It would seem, anyway, to have the effect of spreading the responsibility for censorship and so achieving a certain amount of immunity from criticism for all concerned. The responsibility for theatre censorship rests squarely on the frequently belaboured shoulders of the Lord Chamberlain. But the film censor, if attacked, can always refer to the fact that any local authority has the power to override his decisions. Occasionally a local authority does this; there was the spectacle last year of coachloads

of pilgrims turning up in Cambridge to see *The Wild One* when it managed by this means to get a showing there. *Trois Femmes*, refused a certificate by the Board, was given a "U" by the L.C.C. provided it was shown in an unsubtitled version and an "A" if shown in a subtitled version—which implied unlimited disrespect for the linguistic abilities of the Londoner.

All in all, however, it is the Board which effectively decides what the public may and may not see, and Mr. Watkins is a plausible exponent of its view of the problem. He and his staff are appointed by the President of the Board, who is appointed by a committee representing the film industry. There are seven examiners (four men, three women) who view films under a rota system, with normally a minimum of two at work on a given film. The qualifications of these examiners, according to a leaflet issued by the Board, are "a first class education; knowledge of life and experience of the world; common sense, a sense of humour and imaginative insight into audience reactions"—a combination of qualities suggesting that a film examiner has to be a kind of intellectual, emotional and psychological commando. Mr. Watkins says there are two further qualities required in an examiner: a liking for films and a healthy dislike of censorship. The recruitment of film examiners (who must have no connection with the film industry) must be a formidably difficult task.

In the course of a year the Board sees between 2,000 and 3,000 films of which about 600 are features; the rest are shorts and trailers. Newsreels are protected from censorship by the concept of Press freedom. The Board has no fixed code in the light of which to make its judgments: in the words of its manifesto "*The Board's aim is to exclude from public exhibition anything likely to impair the moral standards of the public, by extenuating vice or crime or by depreciating social standards, and anything likely to give offence to any reasonably-minded members of the audience.*" This, in a world of neurosis and psychological imponderables, is surely an impossibly lofty intention, and one can but feel for the four men and three women in their labours. About 30 films a year are given the "X" treatment, about 6 to 8 are refused a certificate and so virtually banned. Taxed about these forbidden films, Mr. Watkins assured me that, except for the odd case like *The Wild One* which everyone hears about, they are almost exclusively trashy second features. The film fancier, however, cannot help having nagging doubts about the non-appearance here of such films as the American *Girl Crazy* (directed by Irving Lerner who worked on *Muscle Beach*) and Joris Ivens' *Song of the Rivers*, made in East Germany (script by Bertolt Brecht, music by Shostakovich). Both, judging by foreign reports, are uncommonly interesting films, but it seems possible that the first was considered too violent and the second too politically controversial.

What is perhaps of more material significance than the number of films banned is the number of cuts made in the films we do see. When I asked Mr. Watkins about this he said, "*There's no secret about it. We cut approximately one film in three.*" Violence is the main object of censor disapproval, American violence in particular. Mr. Watkins thinks that without the violence in American films the number of films cut might be reduced to one in ten. This means, of course, that the number of American films cut is something more than one in three. During the first 7 months of 1955, 389 features were examined and 624 cuts were made, mainly of the aforesaid violence. The ferocity of American films has undeniably increased in the last few years, and Mr. Watkins has issued one or two warnings about it to Hollywood producers, without noticeable results so far. He told me of a scene in an unspecified American film in which a man is forced to wear a deaf-aid while his tormentors put a radio which is blaring jazz next to the receiving end of the instrument and turn up the volume to an excruciating loudness. "*It was horrible*", he said, and so it sounds. Yet Mr. Watkins is proud of the fact that the Board passed the brutal final

1930

U.S.A. : *Diary of a Lost Girl.*
BRITAIN : *Le Coquille et le Clergyman. Storm Over Asia. Potemkin. Night Patrol.*
GREECE : *All Quiet on the Western Front.*
GERMANY : *All Quiet on the Western Front.*
FRANCE : *Arsenal. The General Line.*
CHINA : *Storm Over Asia.*

1931

FRANCE : *L'age d'or.*
ITALY : *L'age d'or.*
BRITAIN : *Outward Bound. The Brothers Karamazov. Joyless Street.*
CHINA : *The Invisible Man. Frankenstein.*

1932

BRITAIN : *Freaks. October. The Ghost That Never Returns.*
SPAIN : *Land Without Bread.*
FRANCE : *Dreigroschenoper. Golden Mountains. Zero de Conduite.*

1933

ITALY : *Duck Soup.*
U.S.A. : *Testament of Dr. Mabuse. No Man's Land.*
GERMANY : *Testament of Dr. Mabuse. Kuhle Wampe. Kameradschaft. Dreigroschenoper.*
BRITAIN : *Extase. Dreigroschenoper.*
DENMARK : *Mask of Fu Manchu.*
FRANCE : *Mask of Fu Manchu.*

1934

BRITAIN : *An American Tragedy. Bed and Sofa. Zero de Conduite.*
DENMARK : *Amok.*
FRANCE : *Extase.*
U.S.A. : *Extase.*
JAPAN : *Rasputin and the Empress. Strange Interlude.*

1935

CHINA : *She. Shanghai Express.*
U.S.A. : *Angèle.*
FRANCE : *The President Vanishes.*
DENMARK : *Mark of the Vampire. Hands of Orlac.*
BRITAIN : *L'idée. Amok.*

1936

GERMANY : *Romeo and Juliet. The Great Ziegfeld.*
ITALY : *A Night at the Opera.*
SWEDEN : *Winterset.*
CZECHOSLOVAKIA : *Winterset.*
SINGAPORE : *Maedchen in Uniform.*
CHINA : *The Ghost Goes West. Devil Doll. The General Died at Dawn. Bitter Tea of General Yen.*
BRITAIN : *Saionji (March of Time on Japan)*

1937

CANADA : *Life of Emile Zola.*
U.S.A. : *Spanish Earth.*
FRANCE : *Black Legion. Life of Emile Zola.*
POLAND : *Life of Emile Zola. Man Who Could Work Miracles.*
HUNGARY : *The Green Pastures. You Only Live Once.*

1937

BRITISH WEST INDIES : *Fury. You Only Live Once.*
SINGAPORE : *Fury. O.H.M.S.*
VENEZUELA, PERU : *Fury.*
SWEDEN : *Fury. Love from a Stranger.*
FINLAND : *Love from a Stranger. Night Must Fall. The Green Pastures.*
SWITZERLAND : *Black Legion.*
FRANCE : *Black Legion. Life of Emile Zola.*
AUSTRIA : *Dead End.*
HOLLAND : *Black Legion. Love from a Stranger.*
PALESTINE : *You Only Live Once. The Green Pastures.*
TURKEY : *Lives of a Bengal Lancer.*
CHINA : *The Green Pastures. Dracula's Daughter.*
JAPAN : *Mademoiselle Docteur.*
AUSTRALIA : *The Green Pastures.*
BRITAIN : *The Green Pastures. Golgotha. Club de Femmes. Inside Nazi Germany (March of Time).*
N. IRELAND : *Plough and the Stars.*

1938

BRITAIN : *Hortobaggy. The Relief of Lucknow.*
BRITISH WEST INDIES : *Dead End. The Last Gangster. Wells Fargo.*
MALAYA : *Bulldog Drummond Escapes. Last Train from Madrid.*
DUTCH EAST INDIES : *Winterset. Marked Woman. Slight Case of Murder.*
SINGAPORE : *Madame X. Gangway.*
SIAM : *The Squeaker.*
JAPAN : *La Grande Illusion. Blockade.*
CHINA : *The Road Back. Man Who Could Work Miracles.*
POLAND, BULGARIA, PORTUGAL, PERU, GUATEMALA : *Blockade.*
CZECHOSLOVAKIA : *Blockade. Plough and the Stars.*
YUGOSLAVIA : *Blockade. La Marseillaise. Prisoner of Zenda.*
GREECE : *Prisoner of Zenda.*
SPAIN : *The Green Pastures. Blockade. Last Train from Madrid.*
GERMANY : *Blockade. Swiss Miss. Mr. Deeds Goes to Town. Last Train from Madrid. The Road Back.*
ITALY : *Blockade. All Mickey Mouse and Popeye Films.*
BRAZIL : *Sabotage. The Road Back.*
U.S.A. : *The Vessel of Wrath.*
LATVIA : *A Day at the Races.*
EL SALVADOR : *Storm in a Teacup.*

1939

FRANCE : *Idiot's Delight. The Road Back. Dawn Patrol. Yellow Jack. Refugee Today and Tomorrow (March of Time).*
GERMANY : *The Citadel. The Plainsman. Lost Horizon.*
HOLLAND : *Confessions of a Nazi Spy. Night Must Fall. Club de Femmes.*
SWITZERLAND : *Confessions of a Nazi Spy. Slight Case of Murder.*
NORWAY : *Confessions of a Nazi Spy.*

passage in *On the Waterfront*—a sequence which some feel might have been cut on artistic grounds if not moral ones. But aesthetic values are no concern of the censor, except to the extent that they affect for better or worse the moral tone of a given scene. Mr. Watkins admits that he and his examiners sometimes make artistic judgments: *La Ronde* got by because it was "so witty and charming" and in spite of the fact that "it was all about people sleeping together". *The Snake Pit* was seen 8 times and passed (with cuts) because it "was such a damned fine film". Other films towards which the Board was similarly indulgent were *Nous Sommes Tous des Assassins* and *Olivia*. *The Wild One* was seen 6 times before it was (reluctantly, says Mr. Watkins) refused a certificate.

The expense of running this active little organisation is met by the film trade itself, which pays the Board a fee for each film examined. It might reasonably be thought that the film industry and the Board are natural enemies at daggers drawn, but this apparently is not so. One hears very little feeling criticism of the Board in Wardour Street: censorship seems to be regarded there as a necessary institution and 42 years of familiarity has bred an almost unquestioning toleration of it. The advent of the "X" certificate, it is true, has caused some mild annoyance among renters, who claim that a film put in this category is automatically deprived of the profits to be garnered from what the trade calls "the family audience". For this reason an "X" certificate limits a film's chances of a circuit booking. The British producer who had planned to make a film of Michael Croft's novel about school life, *Spare the Rod*, abandoned the project after submitting it to the Board and learning that the film would probably be given an "X". Occasionally a renter with a film which has been given an "X" will ask for cuts to be made so that it can be passed with an "A". The Board obliges in this fashion about 6 times a year. Such co-operation between censor and censored is hard to imagine in any other country. It is certainly in sharp contrast with what goes on in Hollywood, where Jane Russell once flouted the Production Code in the matter of costume or, rather, lack of costume, and where there is a cynical, evasive attitude towards the Code's rulings epitomised by what a Hollywood director once said to me on the subject: "*Code shmcode. It never spoils a bad picture yet.*"

The other side of the "X", of course, is its commercial exploitation by some distributors—mainly of foreign films. The Board has more than once issued a warning of disapproval to distributors who proudly display the "X" on posters calculated to titillate; and many of the films involved are seamy in every sense of the word. It is difficult, however, to see what more can be done. The censor has no control over cinema advertising, and it may be that the price to be paid for the "X" is the sensationalising of it in certain quarters. While it exists, it is an obvious temptation; any attempt to control cinema advertising raises innumerable difficulties, though in some European countries control now exists.

A 1951 Unesco study of *Legislation for Press, Film and Radio* establishes the fact that "censorship of the film exists everywhere in more or less accentuated form", adding that "it is mainly as regards the cinema that liberal regimes generally and openly practise censorship." In "liberal regimes" film censorship is mainly concerned with morals. It is the apotheosis of the gun-man and the gold-digger, not the debunking of politicians, which bothers Anglo-Saxon censors. America has a muck-raking tradition which gives Hollywood a measure of freedom in its treatment of politics. British film-makers seem content on the whole to use politics as a subject for old-fashioned comedy. Continental censors are rather more touchy about politics, and the recent French banning of *Bel Ami* was for political reasons.

In Britain the person who decides to tilt against film censorship finds himself mainly up against the familiar taboos in the matter of sex. Although the Board rightly claims that

violence is what it abhors, sex is really the heart of the matter. In a recent article in *Encounter* entitled *The Pornography of Death*, Geoffrey Gorer traced a traditional pornographic link between sex and violence. He persuasively maintained that the depiction of violence in art, even where its context is not recognisably sexual, frequently springs from and appeals to the sexual sense. He finds this true of films (Westerns and thrillers, for example) but goes on to say that no one has yet found solid grounds for believing the depiction of such violence encourages immorality, that it may even help to divert anti-social instincts.

This, of course, is a specialist opinion, but among Anglo-Saxons during the post-war years there has been a noticeable, if rather furtive, acceptance of the belief that honesty about sex is less harmful than the familiar old fairy-tales about it. The fact that Dr. Kinsey and his many less famous colleagues in the field of popular sex elucidation have been neither lynched nor imprisoned, and that Gorer's own *Exploring English Character*, based on the intimate replies to questionnaires of several thousand readers of *The People*, elicited the amount of voluntary self-revelation that it did, is a sign of the times. The British film industry and its executives, who seem anxious to prove themselves as stalwarts of our native conservatism, have failed to absorb these disturbing new ideas. The film trade, like other branches of entertainment business, would like to be respectable and therefore finds little amiss with the censor denaturing its goods. An exceptionally daring renter who might wish to dispute one of the censor's final decisions can do nothing about it, unlike the publisher of a prosecuted book who can fight his case in court.

One reason for the severity of moral censorship in the cinema is the attitude towards films of newspapers and other alleged sources of public opinion. For many years they have more or less tacitly expressed the feeling that the cinema is a rich but common relation of the theatre, that it is a dangerous form of child's play. And it is, of course, quite true that much of what the cinema offers is shallow, shabby, hackneyed. However, it is not necessarily the shallow, the shabby and the hackneyed which the censor succeeds in deleting. In American films we still get plenty of cheap sentimentality, crude materialism and smirking sexual innuendo (this last the result of attempts to get round the Production Code). About certain British films there is an atmosphere of sordid banality which is uniquely distasteful. These are things which anyone who really cares for films regrets and which, through repetition, have the effect of numbing the critical faculties and reducing the audience to a state of blank acceptance. They are also things which the censor feels free, or forced, to allow but which have done most to give the cinema a bad name and to make people think that it needs tough censorship.

There are two further reasons for the severity of our film censorship: first, there is a commonly accepted theory that what is seen on a cinema screen is in some way more potent than what is seen in print. For the literally illiterate this is obviously true, but there is no clear evidence that the theory as applied to the greater part of the population has anything approaching absolute validity. Second, national pudency tends to apply a much stricter moral code to public entertainment, entertainment enjoyed in the mass, than to private pastimes. Because of this a man, woman or child who is debarred from seeing Marlon Brando on the rampage in the cinema is quite free to read, in domestic privacy, an obscenely angled account of similar violence and immorality in a Sunday newspaper. For the same reason book publishers are comparatively free from censorship, as are the shops in Soho and elsewhere which are allowed quite openly to sell out-and-out pornography.

Since the public is exposed to such a welter of erotic and sadistic stimulation in newspapers, magazines, books and advertisements, why must it be so carefully coddled as regards the cinema? The orthodox answer to this is that the children must be protected, implying that human beings under 16

1939

ITALY : Hurricane. House of Rothschild. A Day at the Races.

JAPAN : They Won't Forget. Rosalie. Gunga Din.

EGYPT : Dawn Patrol.

RUMANIA : Marie Antoinette.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA : Quai des Brumes. The Great Waltz.

GREECE : Dead End.

FINLAND : Son of Frankenstein. Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse.

LATVIA : Merrily We Live.

ESTONIA : Love Finds Andy Hardy. Idiot's Delight.

CANADA : Wuthering Heights. The Roaring 20's.

U.S.A. : Le Puritain. Remous. Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Le Roi S'amuse.

INDIA : Gunga Din.

1944

U.S.A. : Fanny by Gaslight.

1945

EIRE : Brief Encounter.

1946

NORWAY : Johnny Eager.

EIRE : Les Anges du Peché.

1947

EIRE : Black Narcissus.

1948

SWITZERLAND : Les Parents Terribles.

SWEDEN : Love from a Stranger (No. 2). Street With No Name.

DENMARK : Love from a Stranger (No.2).

1949

U.S.A. : Bicycle Thieves.

1950

BRITAIN : Occupe-Toi d'Amelie.

1951

U.S.A. : Il Miracolo.

1952

FRANCE : The Fall of Berlin (Part 2).

SPAIN : Le Petit Monde de Don Camillo.

1953

GUATEMALA : Le Salaire de la Peur.

BRITAIN : L'auberge Rouge. Time in the Sun.

1954

BRITAIN : Trois Femmes.

U.S.A. : The Moon is Blue.

FRANCE : Bel Ami.

PAKISTAN : Saadia.

1955

ITALY : The Barefoot Contessa. Les Diaboliques. Madame Dubarry.

BRITAIN : The Wild One.

U.S.A. : I Am a Camera. Man with the Golden Arm. Bread Love and Dreams. Simba. Carrington V.C.

SWITZERLAND : Rififi.

SOUTH AFRICA : Rififi. French Cancan. The Big Family.

SWEDEN : La Tour de Nesle.

MEXICO : Raices.

EIRE : The Prisoner.

never read newspapers or books. The belief that children are peculiarly prone to emulate the delinquencies they see depicted on the screen is widespread and strong. An examining magistrate has said: "I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that . . . films and detective thrillers have had . . . most harmful effects, and that there is no need to search further for the origin of delinquent behaviour in children and adolescents". Josette Frank, a child psychologist, writing about screen violence and juvenile behaviour, says: "I believe that this type of vicarious adventure, escape, excitement, even blood and thunder is necessary and important to most children as outlets for their own emotions, particularly their feelings of aggression". These statements represent the two poles of opinion on the subject, and the fact that both can be made quite seriously shows how very little is really known about the correlation of violence and immorality in films, etc., and juvenile delinquency. The censor, however, appears to have few doubts about the matter and cuts and categorises films as if the problems of what is bad for children can be solved by simple common sense. Regarding the "X" certificate, for example, it is extremely doubtful whether 16 should have been made the crucial age. If a certain film is thought likely to disturb an adolescent of 14 or 15, what earthly psychological reason is there for supposing that an adolescent of 16 will be unaffected by it? In fact, it could be argued that "X" films, in so far as they are likely to inspire delinquency, are more likely to inspire it in the over-16 adolescent than the under-16 one.

Presuming the need for some form of film censorship, and realising the bewildering bulk and variety of the material with which the censors must deal, one cannot help sympathising with them. However beneficent their intentions and wise their decisions, they are bound to come in for plenty of abuse. What one jibs at is the number of cuts now being made by the Board (one film cut in three is a disturbingly high proportion¹); the inability of the film-goer to know, except by internal evidence, whether the film he is watching has been cut and, if so, to what extent; the power of the Board virtually to ban a film without the public knowing anything about it. People who care about the cinema should never forget the existence of the censor's small knife and its power to mar or destroy a good film.

FRANCE Roy Waters

IN America censorship seems mainly to serve prudery, and in England politeness. In France it serves politics. . . .

The present official French Censorship board, known as the Commission de Contrôle des Films, was set up on 3rd July, 1945, with the main object of "preventing publications contrary to good morals, or liable to disturb public order." To effect this, it has power to ban films outright, or to forbid them to children under sixteen (our "X" certificate—there is no "A"). Unlike the British Board of Film Censors, which was established by the film industry itself, the Commission de Contrôle is a government body, and is principally composed of representatives of the various Ministries, with members of the industry in a minority. It is moreover, through the Centre National de la Cinématographie, entirely dependent on the Minister of Industry and Commerce, who is empowered to lift a ban in contradiction to the decision of the Commission. On the other hand, it was until recently supposed that he had no power to impose one on a film

¹ Some recent examples: films with an "X" but still cut by the Board in parts have included *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Rififi*, *The Big Heat*, *Casque d'Or*, *Los Olvidados*, *La Vie Commence Demain*, *Les Orgueilleux*. Films with an "A" or "U" that incurred cuts have included *Mister Roberts*, *The Big Knife*, *O' Cangaceiro*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Robinson Crusoe*.

passed by the Commission, the relevant text reading: "As far as all films entirely produced in French territory are concerned, the decision to refuse a visa can only be taken with regard to France itself, on a reasoned recommendation from the Commission." Lately, however, this has been interpreted as meaning that, although the Minister is obliged to receive the Commission's recommendation, he is not obliged to follow it; and thus, in effect, his powers are absolute, apart from a not very hopeful final appeal to the Prime Minister.

But this is by no means the only censorship body active in France. Also under the Centre National (which, with a board of directors consisting of representatives of the Ministries, has some control over all film affairs, including production, distribution, the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques, the Cinémathèque Française, and so on) is a committee known as the Commission d'Autorisation de Tournage. A permanent member of this committee is the President of the Commission de Contrôle of which we have just spoken—himself a very senior state official. In spite of its governmental ties, however, this body is more representative of the Industry. Its authorisation, although not obligatory, is necessary at the scenario stage to a producer wishing to obtain credit from public funds. He also needs the approval of a further Commission d'Agrément and must finally apply to the Credit National, consequently submitting to scrutiny and possible censorship at a number of different levels, both before and after the film is completed.

Of these various bodies, the most important from our point of view is the Commission de Contrôle, and it is here that political censorship is seen at its most dangerous. While the Commission's function is officially to protect both morals and public order, the government, perhaps inevitably, is more concerned with the latter than with the former. A few examples will serve to illustrate this point. We may take first the case of *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (Resnais and Marker), an excellent film illustrating the aesthetic and religious values of Negro art, which won the Prix Jean Vigo in 1954 as the best documentary of the year. It has never been publicly shown, however, being banned by the censor, whose veto applies to society as well as commercial performances. This is because it touches on the colonial problem, implying that white people, supposing themselves of superior culture, have exploited and debased Negro art. Yet the whole tone and presentation of the film is objective, and its interest aesthetic rather than racial.

Vigo's brilliant *Zéro de Conduite* is another example. The representative of the Ministry of Education on the Commission continues to insist on its suppression as liable to lead to indiscipline (although other motives are suggested); and for a long time he banned also the harmless *Plus de Vacances pour le Bon Dieu* as conducive to the practice of blackmail among schoolchildren. Bunuel's *L'Âge d'Or* is still banned, and *Potemkin* itself was only passed a year or two ago. Some jokes at the expense of the gendarmerie in Autant-Lara's *L'Auberge Rouge* offended the Ministry of the Interior, and had to be cut. More serious, the same Ministry insisted that the guillotine sequence at the end of Becker's *Casque d'Or* be cut (the guillotine always a symbol of revolution) until Becker himself insisted even more strongly that it be retained and, in this case, gained his point. The Catholic journal *Radio-Cinéma* has listed subjects of serious topical interest which seem too 'dangerous' for producers to attempt, among them the plight of North African immigrants in France, the failure of the campaign to reduce prices, the question of empty mansions in the midst of housing shortages, or the fact that concentration camps have existed.

The lack of clear objective principles governing the various censorship bodies leads to several absurd situations. *Les Impures* (Pierre Chevallier; with Micheline Presle and Raymond Pellegrin) was passed by the Catholic Centrale du Cinéma (which gives an independent moral rating to all films shown in France) as suitable, with certain reserves, for

adult audiences, but the state Commission de Contrôle banned it—on purely moral grounds—though the film was later released with cuts. Another film, *Au Diable la Vertu*, was banned, again on moral grounds, by the Commission, but passed, over their heads and with no explanation, by the Minister of Industry and Commerce. It is suggested that powerful financial interests were involved. On the other hand, *La Terre Fleurira*, a documentary dealing with the Communist paper *L'Humanité*, was passed by the Commission de Contrôle for non-commercial showing and then banned by the Minister—an action the legality of which is doubtful.

Further absurdity arises over two Franco-Italian films, *Avant le Deluge* (dealing with juvenile delinquency, winner of the Prix International at Cannes in 1954, and attacked by the police for its interrogation sequences) and *Madame du Barry*, both of which, although passed for showing in France, have been forbidden export visas. Yet the Italian versions of these films are Italian property, and thus available for export.

The governmental element—for it is, on the whole, governmental rather than party political interests that are concerned—is equally evident in censorship at the scenario stage, and this censorship is becoming increasingly customary as Bank grants become almost essential. André Bazin has said of pre-censorship: "The Commission d'Autorisation de Tournage tends to advise it more and more urgently if the subject of the film presents any danger of censorship. The Centre National encourages the practice, and, on his side, the president of the Commission de Contrôle (which has its headquarters at the Commission d'Autorisation), repeatedly does the same." (The multiplicity of censorship bodies is striking, and in itself a dangerous sign.)

We may note two examples of the working of pre-censorship: first, *Operation Cocotte* (Giles Grangier), a film which would have shown French soldiers, issued with the latest and most scientific weapons, and, as the *Canard Enchaîné* put it, "involved in misadventures similar to those of Charlot in *Modern Times* until a sergeant, disdaining the jeeps, helicopters and jet planes, and remaining faithful to his old mare Cocotte, finally saves the situation." Fearing that it would bring ridicule on the War Office, and show a defeatist spirit at a time when American war materials are still pouring across the Atlantic, this film, rich with satiric possibilities, was recently banned at the scenario stage and will not now be made.

A further, and perhaps more important, example is that of André Cayatte's *L'Affaire Seznec*. This was to have come before *Justice est Faite* and *Nous Sommes Tous les Assassins*, as the first of a trilogy dealing with the processes of justice in France. In it Cayatte intended simply to state the facts of the preparation of the case against a certain Guillaume Seznec, accused of murder in 1923 and condemned on circumstantial evidence. The film was conceived on purely documentary lines, and Cayatte hoped that it would bring to closer public attention the faults of the French system of "instruction criminelle." This appears now to have been done in reality by cases like those of Dominici, Marguerite Maury and others, but Cayatte's scenario, referred from the Centre National to the Commission de Censure, and from there to the Ministry of Justice where the Minister himself personally intervened to impose the ban, will probably never be made, in spite of the quality and evident sincerity of his other two films. (Incidentally, his latest work, *Le Dossier Noir*, after having been passed by the Commission, was submitted by the Minister of Industry and Commerce to the Department of Justice for a further censorship, which it fortunately survived.)

While pre-censorship seems often to be excessively restrictive, it has not even the virtue of being reliable. The scenario of a version of Maupassant's *Bel Ami* was submitted by Louis Daquin to the Commission d'Autorisation (on which, you will remember, sits the president of the Commission de Contrôle) and was passed. When the completed film was

later submitted to the Commission de Contrôle, it was banned. Daquin made a number of important cuts and submitted the film again; this time the Commission passed it by 12 votes to 6, and the certificate was sent to the Minister for his signature. But he refused to sign, arguing that it was within his power to do so since the film, having been shot in Austria, was not a French production and thus not within the scope of the Commission de Contrôle. In view of the fact that the director and the leading players are French, and that the film is an adaptation of Maupassant's story, this is clearly a quibble. There has been a considerable outcry against this decision, which was undoubtedly due to the fact that the film deals with colonialism, bribery and corruption; and Daquin is a Communist. But the film is still banned.

There is, however, another aspect of censorship in France which has, as yet, no parallel in England: this is the post-censorship, or censorship by local bodies. Local authorities over here have the power, of course, to ban films passed by the B.B.F.C., but it is a right rarely exercised. This is not so in France. The Mayor of a French town is greatly influenced by pressure from local groups, particularly such bodies as the Association de Pères des Familles Nombreuses, the Association des Officiers de Réserve, and the various religious groups. Films like Renoir's *La Chienne* and Autant-Lara's *Le Diable au Corps*, as well as the more expendable *Caprices de Caroline Chérie*, have been banned locally; and the most recently notorious example was that of *Le Blé en Herbe*, banned at Nice in 1954 amid great uproar. At Caen protests against the same film were made by the Christian Youth and Confessional Obedience movements, the various Family Associations, and that of Reserve Officers, and it was not until a strong counter-movement arose, and Autant-Lara himself visited the town, that the proposed ban was rejected. The film then ran for three weeks instead of the one that had been anticipated. Again, at Laval in the Mayenne department, the mayor, after consulting the archbishop, passed the film for showing. At this the Family Associations organised a protest demonstration. The Mayor, intimidated, banned the film at the last moment, but infuriated spectators, who had booked their seats, formed a spontaneous demonstration of their own. Next day the ban was lifted, and the film played to packed houses. Successes of this kind are rare, however, and the mere name of some directors is liable to cause an outcry. Autant-Lara, for example, fighting constantly against false social codes of morality, religion and patriotism, has been particularly unlucky with the censor, and even his recent *Le Rouge et le Noir* has been attacked.

If the Mayor resists this kind of pressure, demonstrations may be organised by local bodies, and can often cause apprehensive distributors to withdraw a film from their circuits. The Left is not always the victim in these cases: Communist demonstrations were responsible for the withdrawal from some cinemas of *Un Homme Marche dans la Ville* (Pagliero), and *Les Mains Sales* only survived with difficulty.

Finally, there is the important question of Catholic censorship. The Centrale Catholique du Cinéma has no legal authority to censor films at all, but in controlling thousands of active believers in France it has, in fact, a great influence on film distributors and thus on producers. Its judgments are expressed through a system of moral classifications, which are intentionally purely negative and in no way concerned with a film's artistic merits. Six classes are at present in use. These are: "3"—may be seen by all (e.g. *Elizabeth*, *Queen of England*); "3b"—may be seen, but with reservations for small children (e.g. *Stars of the Russian Ballet*, *The Maggie*); "4"—may be seen by adults and forewarned adolescents (e.g. *Lettres de Mon Moulin*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Elephant Walk*); "4a"—may be seen,

(continued on page 220)

New Names

SPAIN

Little is known about the Spanish cinema—except, of course, about Bunuel, who has not worked in his own country for 20 years. Censorship, undoubtedly, has been the main factor retarding its development—internal and external, affecting not only the choice of subjects but restricting contact with the outside world. In the last few years, however, there have been intermittent signs of a slackening of controls; and the solidarity of a group of young critics and film-makers, who edit two film magazines—"Objetivo" and "Cinema

Universitario" has begun to make itself felt. At Salamanca in May, 1955, a conference was organised at which the problems of film-making in Spain were freely discussed, and the chief speakers were L. G. Berlanga and J. A. Bardem, the most gifted of the younger Spanish directors. Their work, which shows the influence of the postwar Italian cinema, has been the first to penetrate contemporary Spanish life in any depth.

This material on Bardem and Berlanga was supplied by our Spanish correspondent, Francisco Aranda.



BARDEM

Born in 1922, Juan Antonio Bardem was formerly an engineer and worked for the film department of the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1947, like Berlanga, he joined the Cinema Institute; *Aeropuerto de Barajas*, was an efficient textbook documentary. His first feature film was *Comicos* (1954), a sharply critical account of the lives of second-rate theatre people. This showed an astonishing, almost precocious maturity of expression, and some genuine observation—but also too much "effect". Composition, lighting, editing, were all overloaded.

Felices Pascuas (1954) was a comedy about a young middle-class family given a lamb for Easter who cannot make up their minds whether to kill it or not. A clever work with some neo-realistic trimmings and a distinct sense of milieu—but too thin. *Death of a Cyclist* (1955) won the Critics' Award at the Cannes Festival and established Bardem as a new name. The film's point of departure is brilliant; a clandestine, adulterous love affair (the woman comes from the rich upper class of Madrid) is threatened

by a car accident, in which the couple run over a cyclist. They attempt to conceal the accident through fear of their relationship being exposed. The story contains some effective incidental social comment, though its implications are not fully developed—too much "style" again, an almost frigid surface perfection.

Bardem most strongly represents the young Spanish film-maker who is aware of the social and political burdens of his generation. A severe, even bitter denunciator of the society in which he lives, with an outstanding talent for atmosphere, he might be a genuinely tragic director were it not for his mathematical approach and lack of sympathy for his own characters. Europeanised, and strictly intellectual in technique, Bardem is—like Berlanga—the complete author of his films, controlling script, direction and editing. He might develop further than Berlanga, for he knows more exactly what he wants, is more conscious of social realities; but Berlanga is more intuitive, more humane. At worst, the element of softness in Berlanga's work could prevent his complete development, and Bardem could fall victim to his own mannerisms of approach and style. But they remain the two directors most likely to broaden the horizons of the Spanish cinema.



Bardem's "Death of a Cyclist". Lucia Bose (centre)



BERLANGA

Born in 1921, in Valencia; studied philosophy at the university; joined the new Institute of Cinema Research and Experiment in Madrid, 1947, where he made two experimental films—*Paseo sobre una Guerra Antigua* (with Bardem, 1949), and *El Circo* (1950), in which his most personal characteristics already emerged. Tender observation of the simple and humble: a straightforward, unsophisticated intimacy.

In 1951 formed his own company with friends, and made *Esa Pareja Feliz* (screenplay and direction with Bardem, but mainly his), the story of a lower middle-class couple in Madrid and their everyday problems. *Welcome Mr. Marshall!* followed (script with Bardem), a modest, good-humoured comedy about the reactions of a poor Castilian village to the news of an impending visit from the Marshall Plan commission. A pleasant enough film, but not Berlanga's best—a pity it is the only one known outside Spain.

His next film was *Novio a la Vista*, a comedy set in a popular middle-class seaside resort during the 1900's, at which an adolescent love affair shocks the surrounding society of conventional adults. In 1954 Berlanga travelled through the poorest provinces of Spain with Cesare Zavattini and the critic Munoz Suay. They wrote a script, *Spanish Stories*, composed of six sketches (a village bullfight, a farmer called up to military service in Barcelona, a child who did not know how to smile); after this, Berlanga wrote *Film Festival*, a farce about the organisation of a Film Festival for Peace in a small country—international conflicts and tensions resulting, different public reactions to propaganda from different countries. Neither of these scripts has yet found a producer.

Los Gancheros (1955), a violent, impressionistic work about the life of lumbermen in the sierra country, was banned by the censor. Berlanga is now finishing *Calabuig*, about an atomic scientist who flees to a little fishing village on the coast near Valencia, and just makes fireworks to entertain the people there. Discovered by Americans and Russians, he refuses all their generous offers in order to remain in this simple, remote community.

Berlanga is the most gifted artist of the Spanish cinema since Bunuel. His films are incisive, alive to contemporary problems, although softened by his poetic sense of humour and a gentle charm—maybe, also, by a little escapism. His style, fluent and spontaneous in the neo-realist manner, but strongly indigenous, may well create a tradition of Spanish film comedy.

Berlanga's "*Esa Pareja Feliz*": a tenement scene.



SIR ALEXANDER KORDA



Sir Alexander Korda died on January 23rd, 1956. We are glad to publish these personal tributes from some of his colleagues and friends.

WHEN, getting on for two years ago, it was decided (some think rashly and ill-advisedly) to appoint a receiver to British Lion, Sir Alexander Korda at once resigned from his post as production adviser.

A few weeks later a director newly appointed to the reconstituted board called on him and actually asked him if he could recommend a successor for his job. Alex, privately amused by the situation, replied solemnly, "That is a very difficult question for me to answer. You see, sir, I do not grow on trees."

He certainly didn't.

Frank Launder and I scarcely knew Alex until the last seven years or so. I had only met him once before myself, other than socially, and that was when I went to see him about a job in 1932, before he had made *Henry VIII*. All I really remember of the interview is that he asked me what scripts

I had written, and when I told him my last job was *Rome Express* he at once demanded to know whether I had received screen credit for it. . . .

Much has already been written of his pictures and many stories have been told about him. No personality half as big has been seen in our professional world here. There was nothing small about him. It has been generally remarked that he had great charm. Many others have had that, too, without being so kind and so considerate of the feelings of quite unimportant people.

But when he erupted, the explosion was violent, and all within reach of it felt its blast. In these moods he was imperious, capricious, and could dominate anybody. The truth was perhaps that he was always inclined to act on impulse rather than after reflection, a tendency which led to his greatest triumphs as well as his more grandiose disasters. After all, impulse goes hand in hand with enthusiasm, and Alex above all was a great enthusiast.

He has often been called extravagant. But how difficult it must have been for a cosmopolitan of bounding imagination even to attempt to confine himself within the hundred and one restrictions—and crises—of film-making in this country, or to accommodate his bold (and at times reckless) temperament to the rigidity imposed by the inverted pyramid of the industry's structure here, where production has always been forced into a subordinate role, and where, as he always maintained, the rewards to the producer of a successful production are disproportionately small!

It is a wonder that he ever stayed with us to go on trying, and almost a miracle that he so often succeeded.

The newspapers naturally stress the lavish impresario rather than the statesman in Alex. In fact, sufficient tribute has never been paid to the patient, unremitting and ingenious labour that Alex put in for British film production at trade organisation and, often, Government levels. It is to him more than any other man in the business that we owe the salvaging of production a few years back, through the formation of the N.F.F.C. and the setting-up of the Eady fund. Alex was easily bored, and when bored, he suffered more than most of us. I know that he found much of this labour boring in the extreme and utterly uncongenial, but he never let up until he became too tired to carry on. In this respect alone we all owe him a very great deal.

Of all the films that this most lovable man made personally, one finds oneself thinking of that wonderful last scene of *Rembrandt*. Somehow it expresses Alex for me today more than anything else of his that I remember. Rembrandt is painting his last self-portrait; his look becomes fixed on his reflection in the mirror. He sees the pouchy, lined, tired, broken-down face of an old, great man. "Vanitas vanitatum", he whispers, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

SIDNEY GILLIAT.

FOR a writer, with the death of Korda, fun has gone out of the film industry—yes, one begins to think of it again as just an industry. So long as he was alive the unexpected might always happen—a chance word at the dinner table and a week later it was quite possible that one might wake in Hong Kong. He was always generous in trust. *The Third Man* began in much that way. Korda over the dinner table wanted a story written with the background of an occupied city. Berlin? Vienna? Vienna would be a more agreeable city to live in—he recommended Vienna and Sacher's cakes. I remember I reconstructed on the back of an envelope the opening sentences of an "entertainment" I had long abandoned. The scene was the Strand—it could equally well be Vienna since there was no plot, no subject. Oh well, he said, perhaps a subject would turn up on the spot. The opening situation was all he required now to draw his contract. But I wanted peace to write in. London was impossible. Italy? I could settle down there for a couple of months away from interruption. After several weeks

in Venice I had still not found my story, but Korda was unworried and never once during the two months in Italy did he ask for a report on progress.

The fun has really gone. He has no successor, no one with whom it is possible *not* to talk about films, the matter in hand, but about painting, poetry, music, anything in the world rather than that "industry" which always seemed on the point of quietly, out of neglect, becoming an "art" while he was away, reading Baudelaire somewhere among the islands of Greece.

GRAHAM GREENE.

WHAT might be called the secret of Alexander Korda could be discovered in the first five minutes of meeting him. That is not to say that his nature was simple, it was not. There were as many layers and stratas and veins in his nature as in any man's, possibly more, but the one bright golden vein, this secret, by its very nature, lay near to the surface, so it might be seen at once. This rare and indefinable possession was, in my opinion, chiefly responsible for his greatness. It was his gift of charm—and a strength of personality that could well be described as hypnotic. Hypnotists, they say, are unable to make their subject do anything against their inner will. Alexander Korda was continually making people do things against their will but seldom against their interest.

I remember an instance in which Alex Korda made me do something against my will not so very long ago. He proposed that I should play in the film, *The Sound Barrier*. When I had read the script I did not see how the story could be made very effective and I was not at all drawn to play the part, so I declined. Alex told me I was making a big mistake and so I read the script again, but I was not enlightened. He became more pressing. It was very flattering to be asked, but I dislike so much to proceed along a path of work in which I can see no light. Again I refused. At last Alex asked me to read the part for a couple of days with the other actors in the film when, he assured me, I should find my feet. The result was worse than I expected—I failed completely to find my feet and at the end of the second day's reading I said to my wife: "*Nothing on this earth will induce me to play this wretched part. I'm going straight down to the office tomorrow morning to tell Alex that I will have nothing whatever to do with it.*"

In the morning there was the usual little crowd of people waiting to see Korda at 147 Piccadilly. But my anger, my frustration and my impatience to be rid of my burden bore me past the others and through the big doors of his office which closed behind me. Five minutes later they opened for me again, and I was saying: "*All right Alex, I will do this for you—Lord knows, I would do it for no other living man.*"

The film was very successful—I really enjoyed my work on it, I even got an award for my performance and I did not find it a great effort. How differently that venture turned out to many others in which I toiled and battled and ended in misfortune.

Whenever I met Alex, if only for a moment, he always gave me something. Sometimes it might be a conscious gift—like a little piece of advice, but it was not that so often as something that seemed to be unconscious, an attitude of mind that shed its light on a problem that was not under discussion at all; a gleam of light from the steel of his personality that gave one courage. Alex received little. To receive was not in his nature—he gave always, that was his nature.

Alex Korda was seldom jovial with me, he was jolly, I believe, on his yacht which I never visited. His manner to me was mostly one of ironic weariness. He gave me the impression that I slightly bored him—very likely I did—but at the same time he drew one towards him. When I was away I wrote to him frequently. He never replied to my letters, or referred to them—perhaps he never had the time—but his actions showed that I was in his thoughts, things were done for me.

Though not so very much older than I am, I regarded him in a way as a father, and to me he was as generous as a prince.

But Alex could be maddening too, and one could be tremendously exasperated by him. These moments came, I think, from the fact that he had a great number of sides to his nature—like an enormous crystal revolving on its orbit—and one never knew which facet might present itself. After struggling with a problem, one would be stunned to find that the edge confronting one would be completely at variance with one's own ideas based on previous discussion. Instead of a helpful reflection of one's thoughts, one found only a refraction, a swift darting away from understanding. Agreement would vanish and one would be left feeling only the hardness of a glass wall and a consequent frustration of mind that set it splintering into a thousand fragments of rage.

In conversation, Alex had a strong sense of style—he often mispronounced the English language, but he always preserved its vowels and consonants.

One of his very first remarks to me when we discussed making the film, *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* was: "*Penny Lopey Dudley-Ward will be the young girl, and you will play the old Col-on-elle!*" His expressions were decorated with fluid reminiscence and taut epigram.

During the war he lived at Claridges Hotel. I stayed there for a few days at that time. There were very few guests, the bombing had thinned away the clientele. Perhaps a dozen of us would sit in the restaurant for dinner. Claridges assumed some of the air of a very good Folkestone boarding-house. Because there were so few diners, one would bow a 'good evening' to each person as one sat down. One of the permanent residents, like Alex, was the King of Greece. The king sat alone at his table, one bowed. Someone said: "*Do you never speak to the king, Alex?*" He answered: "*I never do.*" "Well," someone said, "*don't you think you sort of should, he looks so terribly lonely.*" Alex said: "*It is the business of kings to be lonely.*"

A few days before Alex died, I was at his flat in Kensington. He was in disagreement with his wife Alexa about someone we all knew. "*But he is so terribly rude,*" said someone "*he is always being rude—do you remember how he behaved a few nights ago?*"

"Aha," said his wife, "*but you don't know that he came here the next day and apologised and said how sorry he was for his rudeness—he really did.*"

"That," said Alex, "*is what I cannot bear about the man—he cannot even be rude with conviction.*"

How then to make a summary of this quicksilver personality? Almost impossible, for in him dwelt so many men. The shrewd man of business; the connoisseur and collector of fine arts; the adept at getting the best out of people; the man who could infuriate yet always be forgiven; the most generous and loyal friend, and the possessor of such charm that he endeared himself to all.

There is, alas, no one to replace him.

RALPH RICHARDSON.

Book Reviews

PANORAMA DU FILM NOIR AMERICAIN, by Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton. Illustrated. (Editions de Minuit, Paris.)

"The aim of this panorama is not to pass conclusive judgments on a subject hitherto unexplored (at least in France), but to put forward for the curiosity of amateurs, and perhaps also for the more serious benefit of scholars to come, a number of hypotheses . . ." And certainly the authors of this book have chosen a fascinating province of the contemporary cinema as their subject. They trace the progress of the American *film noir* (that there is no equivalent phrase in English is in itself a tribute to the French critics who coined it) from its germinal years in the early 'forties—*The Maltese Falcon*, *This Gun for Hire* and *The Glass Key*—through its period of hectic achievement and slow decline over the last ten years.

As Mm. Borde and Chaumeton show, this decadent but extremely potent movement of the American cinema has a coherence of style and a depth of implication considerably more serious than English critics have generally been prepared to admit. The only criticism one might make of their study is, in fact, that the most disturbing social morals to be drawn from this school of violence and perverted eroticism are implied rather than stated. Their treatment of the films themselves (most admirably documented) could perhaps have been less catalogue fashion: the habitual ascribing of all creative responsibility to the directors leads to some serious omissions among producers. One would hardly have thought it possible to produce a book on the American *film noir* without a single reference to Hal Wallis.

While analysing with care the elements of the *insolite* in these films (*violence, érotisme voilé, rapports troublés entre hommes*), the authors are careful to stress the limitations of the genre so far. "*Le film noir n'a, par exemple, jamais évoqué l'écheveau des amours lesbiennes, ni les viols préparés par les vieillards, ni l'effroi passionné d'une vierge surprenant un coït, ni les tourments d'une femme frigide.*" But there is still time. Perhaps the steady flow of *films noirs* still reaching London does not get to Paris now? (*I, The Jury*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, *New York Confidential*, *The Big Combo*, etc.). Mm. Borde and Chaumeton may yet have material for a second volume.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

IPOCRITA 1943, by Cesare Zavattini. (Bompiani, Milan).

For those who know of Zavattini only through neo-realist films, this book may come as a surprise. This is how it begins: "Some time in 1943 a man wrote a diary. Just these few pages have come into my hands. No one has ever heard of the unhappy man since. *Pace sepolto.*"

The protagonist of the book speaks in the first person; he is in a state of continual conflict between his evil and his saintly impulses. He is fundamentally a complete bourgeois, with silk shirts, a wife, a son, a warm house and money in his pocket; but (like the character in Kafka's story "The Burrow") he is continuously terrified by the thought of enemies who might deprive him of all these good things. He begins by reviling these imaginary enemies, but little by little, as we read, we lose any clear idea of what exists only in his imagination, and what exists in the real life around him. His imagination becomes more and more real, more and more vivid, while reality gradually loses its well defined contours.

Thus: the man is attending a lecture. In the middle of it he gets to his feet, pointing a revolver at his head. He calls out: "I don't love you—You don't love me—I am going to shoot

myself." Some people clap; some people scream. A shot rings out. Another man has shot himself, crying: "You wanted to humiliate me with your death—but I got there first." A little man sitting in the hall bursts into tears, shouting: "But what am I supposed to do?"

Life becomes more and more complicated for the author of these confessions. He cannot take a step in the street without buses running him over (he dies many times in the course of the book), without cyclists knocking him down, and railway trains running him through. The idea of death, which may arrive from any direction, when least expected, is constant. He may be busy enjoying the beauty of life, drinking in wine or sunshine, suddenly seized by the beauty of a woman crossing the street—but this passionate *joie de vivre* must always be suddenly interrupted by the voice of his Confessor, shouting into his ear: "A hundred dead!" "Two hundred dead! . . ." The man revolts—"No, no, I won't let you kill me. Tonight I am happy!" But the Confessor goes on inexorably: "A thousand dead!" "Two million dead!" The man can have no peace. He shuts the door behind him, he sits down in front of a plate on which there is a whole breast of chicken; but his imagination immediately supplies a gang of rebels, running after him, pinning him to the wall with their bullets. He has just had time to die, when his attention is suddenly rivetted on the sight of a marvellously lovely woman leaning out of the window opposite. . . . Death and resurrection are daily occurrences for him.

The whole of this book is concerned with one simple emotion: the miracle of being alive. Every scene is presented in the most vivid of images, with a purity and innocence that sometimes recalls the "Fioretti" of St. Francis. Profoundly human in its joy and desperation, *Ipocrita* 1943 is something more than a simple (or crazy) poetic fantasy; these wild confessions, with their childlike simplicity of expression, express a deep and serious moral attitude. It is not surprising if most of his critics fail to understand him—for in this respect Zavattini is unique in Italy.

LORENZA MAZZETTI.

THEATRICAL COMPANION TO SHAW, by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson. (Rockliff, 42s.)

THEATRICAL COMPANION TO MAUGHAM, by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson. (Rockliff, 42s.)

Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson are demonic collectors and dogged researchers. At the same time they possess the foresight to record history before the evidence has begun to disappear, and the enthusiasm to string together the dry bones of fact into lively and interesting form. Each of these books—part of a series—lists all the plays of a single dramatist, in chronological order of writing. For each play is given a very full synopsis, list of scenes and characters, casts, dates and details of first productions, of every subsequent London production or revival and of all film versions, together with informative general notes and (in the case of Maugham) selections of first-night criticisms.

The result is surprisingly readable, and brings to light many interesting facts. We discover, for example, how many of Shaw's plays were first produced abroad—many in America (including *Caesar and Cleopatra* which was given its first public performance by a Chicago girls' school); *Pygmalion* and *The Millionairess* in Vienna; *The Apple-Cart* in Warsaw; *Bouyant Billions* in Zurich; *O'Flaherty V.C.* in Belgium, on the Western Front. Then there are delightful tidbits like Shaw's private views of Mrs. Pat Campbell, and Maugham's own account of his enjoyment of rehearsals. Both books afford incidentally a continuous picture of stage conditions over (respectively) the thirty and sixty years of the dramatists' working lives; and the Maugham book offers an interesting anthology of a quarter of a century of theatre criticism, including examples of Grein, Walkley, and Agate. (They invite revaluation; Grein, for example, comes out of it very poorly.)

The compilers' treasure hunt has brought them one outstanding reward—the discover of a lost, unpublished and unproduced play by Maugham—*The Road Uphill* (1924). On the evidence given, it does not appear to be a particularly good play, but it is interesting, we are told, as providing the germs of *The Razor's Edge* and of the short story *The Alien Corn*.

Against six adaptations (all talking) from Shaw, Mander and Mitchenson have traced no less than twenty-two film versions of Maugham plays, to say nothing of almost a dozen more based on novels and stories. Maugham's involved plotting and his hateful

middle classes, with their snobberies and cuckoldings, their triangles and gigolos, are more obviously cinematic than the minor extravagances with which Shaw clothed his passionate ponderings.

Inevitably with such a comprehensive compilation of fact, there are errors—but they are remarkably few, and more often than not, merely typographical. There are omissions too, due not to negligent compilation but to the thefts of time which has concealed all trace of the manuscripts of some early productions and any pictorial records of others. (How surprising it is, for example, that no still survives from Maurice Elvey's 1917 film version of *Smith*). The errors—and perhaps some of the omissions too—will no doubt be rectified in future editions when, it may be hoped, the compilers will be able to include an index of players, even if some of the present rather repetitive appendices must be omitted.

DAVID ROBINSON

PERIODICALS

CINEMA '56. January 1956 issue. Published by the Federation Française des Ciné-Clubs, 2 Rue de l'Elysée, Paris 8. (100 frs.)

POSITIF—"FILMS ET AUTEURS," November 1955. Published by Office du Livre et du Cinéma, 24 Rue du Colisée, Paris 8. (400 frs.)

"*Tout savoir sur le cinéma . . .*" The motto of *Cinéma '56*, the magazine of the French Federation of Ciné-Clubs, is either admirably exhaustive, or alarmingly so—according to one's state of intellectual vivacity. There are times, it must be admitted, when the relentless pressure of so much criticism, counter-criticism and counter-counter-criticism becomes unbearable, and one is tempted

to write off the whole pursuit as a sterile occupation.

This would be unfair, however, to *Cinéma '56*. It is a neat and intelligent little periodical with (in its January issue) a decent percentage of informative writing: a serious and unpretentious interview with Gérard Philipe; notes by a young French documentary director on filming in China; and a section on characteristic "revelations" of 1955—Aldrich, Samsonov, Maselli, Bardem and Astruc. If these tributes are on the unquestioning side (Aldrich, with his record of *Vera Cruz*, *The Big Knife* and *Kiss Me Deadly*, is an odd personification of integrity), they provide an interesting indication of young contemporary taste. In his concluding note, "Naissance d'un Style?", Pierre Billard catches the stylistic affinities of these new, deep-focus, anti-classical directors rather well.

The most recent *Positif*, for November, 1955, is crushingly large—a double number of over two hundred pages under the title "Films et Auteurs". This comprehensive label is not really justified by the long succession of film reviews of which the first third of this issue is composed: *French Cancan* (disliked), *Les Diaboliques* (much admired), *Le Rouge et le Noir* (admired), *Beat the Devil* (ecstatic), etc., etc. It is not so much the fact that one disagrees with most of these estimates that makes the critical pages of *Positif* so hard to assimilate, but rather the high-pitched, exhibitionist tone of so much of the writing. Here, for instance, is the editor on *Beat the Devil*: ". . . Quel film! Et comme j'aime Huston! Non seulement chacune de ses oeuvres m'apporte à des titres divers de nouveaux plaisirs, mais l'homme lui-même n'est pas loin de m'apparaître comme un modèle." This sort of chatter, with its tinkling paradoxes ("les seuls films instructifs sont les films destructifs") is in place (perhaps) in a students' café some time after midnight: in cold print it is killing.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

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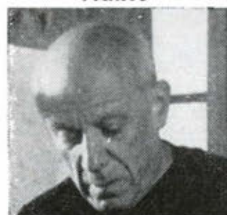
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Correspondence

Ellen Terry Centenary

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

SIR,—The centenary of Ellen Terry's first appearance on the stage will be celebrated at the end of April this year. Granada TV Network intends to produce a television programme which will be dedicated to her memory and pay tribute to the great traditions of the British Theatre. The profits will be given to a theatrical charity.

Ellen Terry's son, Gordon Craig, has volunteered his help and participation. If any of your readers possess information, photographs or other material relating to Ellen Terry, which might be of interest in compiling this programme, I would be most grateful if they would write to me describing any material which they would be willing to lend.

Yours, etc.,
SIDNEY L. BERNSTEIN.

The Granada Theatres Ltd.,
36 Golden Square, W.1.

Caught Out

SIR,—I should like to draw your attention to the illustration at the foot of page 127 of the winter issue of SIGHT AND SOUND which is said to depict the inquisitors in Carl Dreyer's film *Day of Wrath*.

This still comes not from *Day of Wrath* but from Hans Steinhoff's biographical film *Rembrandt*, made in Germany in 1942 and exactly the same illustration appears in the book *Von Deutscher Filmkunst* (1943). The illustration comes, I believe, about two-thirds of the way through the book. If I remember correctly, this is the scene in the film when Rembrandt is accused of living immorally with his maid.

Yours, etc.,
DEREK J. HASKINS.

39 Windermere Road,
Coulson,
Surrey.

Back Numbers

SIR,—May I make an appeal through the columns of your magazine? I have tried the classified columns of various other publications, but have not had any success in 'reaching' the class of cinemagoer I seek.

I am chief script-writer for Danziger Productions—a small but thriving independent company—although we are well known in the field of TV film entertainment. We are now branching out into major production, and I, personally, wish to compile a reference library of SIGHT AND SOUND magazines; so far, I have only been able to obtain copies back to the 1950's. If any of your readers have odd copies—or a whole collection they wish to dispose of, would they please contact me. I can assure you that possession of these magazines will have a definite bearing on the quality of future Danziger productions.

Sincerely trust you can assist me in this matter. Thank you.

Yours, etc.,
BRIAN H. CLEMENS.
27 Tooting Bec Gardens,
S.W.16.

"Les Grandes Manœuvres"

SIR,—To one who has always admired the criticisms of Mr. Gavin Lambert, finding his remarks both informative and accurately judged, it was something of a surprise to find myself in disagreement with him over M. René Clair's *Les Grandes Manœuvres*.

Mr. Lambert states: "... Certainly the film becomes more 'serious'—in the sense that there is less comedy; but it fails to convey human passions suddenly taking over... the drama itself never touches that intensity which would make the reversal, the twist, really telling. The tensions of love are not there, the inherent cruelty of the situation never materialises... Clair's self-imposed remoteness, his non-committal approach to the lovers, has reduced

the human dimension of his material to a purely intellectual one. . . ."

This seems to me not only over critical, but also contradictory to the perfectly balanced style of the film. Surely if a film is to be a good one it should flow evenly; there should be no definite change of mood midway or anywhere. The triumph of *Les Grandes Manœuvres* is that it reflects but a single style throughout. A tender, gentle style which, in lightly arousing the emotions, delicately touches the heart, and so puts both comedy and drama in their proper perspective. If M. Clair were greatly to increase his feelings for the lovers, as it were, making a far more dramatic impact half-way through the film, it would obviously demand a change of both attitude and style. This would interrupt the flow of the film. The second method of approach would not satisfactorily combine with the direction of the comedy to form an equally balanced whole. The rhythmic flow of the narrative would be ruined; the unity of style destroyed. It would result in a film with a second half containing few resemblances in technique to its first half. Surely Mr. Lambert would find this equally, if not even more, displeasing.

Yours, etc.,
JEREMY BOATWRIGHT.

44 Staines Road,
Twickenham,
Middlesex.

Continental

SIR,—I would like to bring to the attention of your readers the increasing number of Continental films being shown by the major circuits.

This trend—it is not, I am assured, anything so definite as a policy—began with *The Wages of Fear*, described as the first Continental film to receive a major circuit booking. It has been continued with Fernandel comedies, *The Great Adventure*, a mutilated version of *Crin Blanc* and *French Cancan* (Odeon-Gaumont) and *Rififi* (A.B.C.).

In drawing this happy development to your attention, I am by no means disinterested. Perhaps publicity about the trend and the fact that the booking of Continentals is at the discretion of local managers may lead to fine films obtaining wider distribution.

So far, unfortunately, no circuit seems to have the courage to tackle U.P.A. cartoons, although individual managers can be persuaded to give them a showing by the use of a little discreet blackmail.

Yours, etc.,
A. J. BIDDULPH.

The Surrey Comet,
20 Church Street,
Kingston-on-Thames.

Without a Song

SIR,—May I congratulate you on devoting good space in your Winter number to the review of two notable Indian films, namely, *Two Acres of Land* and *Munna*? Mr. Gillett's approach is one of understanding and sympathy and some of his remarks (e.g., on the inordinate length of Indian films and the inevitable inclusion of songs and dances in them) should be profitably noted by those among us who would have their efforts duly recognised in the Western film world.

Mr. Abbas' *Munna* is certainly a courageous venture and he deserves all praise for it. But *Munna* is not "the first Indian film without a song" as stated in the review. Far be it from me to detract from the merits of *Munna*; but the first Indian film without a song was conceived, written and produced by me for Wadia Movietone as early as February, 1937. It was a modest and fast-moving thriller called *Navjavan*, the action of which took place within the compass of twenty-four hours.

I still remember the reaction to it at the time of its initial release. Audiences felt that they had been cheated and demanded refund of their tickets. Its country-wide release had to be held up for a short time. I had to add a piece to the trailer of *Navjavan*, making the nature of my experiment clear to the filmgoers. Subsequently, *Navjavan* had the good fortune to remain in the market for quite a long time; and although its repeat bookings were nothing to write home about, the last print was prepared in a Bombay laboratory in 1949.

Yours, etc.,
J. B. H. WADIA.

Wadia Movietone,
89 Casa da Vinci,
Worli Reclamation,
Bombay 18.

The Nazi Cinema

Sir,—I would be grateful if it could be made clear to your readers that the full title of my article in the Autumn 1955 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND was "Glimpses of the Nazi Cinema", which reflected more exactly, I think, my intentions. Although I hope I traced the main outlines in the development of German production from the beginning of the war (when the Nazi cinema set out on its conquest of the European market) to the defeat of 1945, I don't claim by any means to have exhausted such a complex subject; which would need an analysis on the same scale as that of American or Soviet production during the same period.

Yours, etc.,

LOUIS MARCORELLES.

8 Rue Rochecouart,
Paris 9.

Sir Alexander Korda

Sir,—I am editing a special edition of *Cinemages* to be concerned wholly with the life and career of Alexander Korda. I would appreciate it if any of your readers who may possess material such as letters, reviews, articles, filmographies, cuttings, photographs or personal mementoes, would send these to me on loan.

All material will be promptly returned and due acknowledgment will be made. I am especially interested in the personal stories of people who have had the opportunity to work with Korda.

Yours, etc.,

GIDEON BACHMANN.

3951 Gouverneur Avenue,
New York 63, U.S.A.

"Skid Row"

In an editorial note to the article "Filming a Skid Row" by Mark Sufrin in the Winter 1955-56 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, it was erroneously stated that Mr. Sufrin was the director of the film. In fact, as the article explained, the unit consisted of "Lionel Rogosin, who produced and conceived the idea of a film on the Bowery, myself, Richard Bagley as cameraman (there was little specialisation among us, the functions of story, script and direction mutually shared with each taking a little more responsibility in one area), and Darwin Deen as assistant cameraman." We apologise for any misunderstanding the mistake may have caused.

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(LUCHINO VISCONTI continued from page 190)

conflict of opinion that surrounds his artistic achievement. The considerations are by no means always aesthetic. The conflict arises not only from differing tastes within the field of "traditional" criticism as to artists with revolutionary tendencies, but also from the deplorable Italian habit of making a political issue out of any and every aspect of the life and culture of our times (one recalls the disgraceful boycotting of *Senso* at the 1954 Venice Festival). This habit is aggravated in Visconti's case, since he himself joined issue with the aristocratic upper-bourgeois society into which he was born. This situation at home, where he is supported not only by fellow-believers but all modern young critics, has inevitably had repercussions abroad. His films have not been widely shown outside Italy, with the result that people interested in the contemporary cinema have had no opportunity to appreciate Visconti's fundamental role in the history of Italian cinema, to realise that his films stand as cornerstones in the history of neo-realism, indicating new directions in a general sense while never falling into a specific category. Visconti remains for many a kind of myth (note, for instance, how even inside Italy *Ossessione* was not widely circulated for reasons of military politics, nor *La Terra Trema* on account of business politics, how *Senso* was affected both by censorship and commercial pressures): a fascinating and complex myth which, shorn of its superstructure of snobbery and scandal-mongering, reveals to the calm observer a man who is one of the most significant artists in his own country.

(This article has been translated and abridged from the Italian review "Belfagor", to which we are grateful for permission to reprint.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stills:

UNITED ARTISTS for *Othello*, *Killer's Kiss*.
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *Guys and Dolls*, *The Cobweb*, *Blackboard Jungle*, *Trial*.
WARNER BROS. for *Giant*, *Rebel Without a Cause*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Picnic*.
PARAMOUNT for *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Palm Beach Story*.
BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE EXPERIMENTAL FILM FUND for *Together*, *Mamma Don't Allow*.
SEQUENCE FILMS for *O Dreamland*.
J. ARTHUR RANK ORGANISATION for portrait of Joan Greenwood.
WALT DISNEY for *The African Lion*.
UNIFRANCE for *Elena et les Hommes*, *Notebooks of Major Thompson*.
FILMS MARCEAU for *Cela s'appelle l'Aurore*.
FOTO CIVIRANI for *Ossessione*.
FOTO P. RONALD for *Bellissima*.
UNIVERSALIA for *La Terra Trema*.
LUX FILMS for *Senso*.
SOVEXPORT FILM for *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Big Family*, *The Cicada*, *Chums*, *The Return of Vassili Bortnikov*.
PENELARA for *Esa Pareja Feliz*.
SUEVA FILM for *Death of a Cyclist*.

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(FRENCH CENSORSHIP continued from page 211)

with reservations, by adults (e.g. *Huis Clos*, *Les Belles de Nuit*, *Madame de . . .*, *Androcles and the Lion*); "4b"—may not be seen, unless for special reasons (e.g. *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *Les Enfants Terribles*, *Topaze*); and "5"—may not be seen (e.g. *Le Blé en Herbe*, *Sept Péchés Capitaux*, *Caroline Chérie*).

These classifications are applied, from a generally moral point of view, with a fair degree of enlightenment, but of course on religious questions they are dogmatic, and can have a great influence on audiences at all cinemas. Moreover, the Centrale Catholique itself has claimed that many cinema managers will never show any film rated "5," and that the 750 ordinary cinemas and 1,000 16 mm. halls in the "Family Circuit" are bound to refuse all films rated "4a," "4b" or "5." All this has inevitably a very marked effect on the box office, and can thereby effectively stifle any director wishing to make a film seriously concerned with moral issues if it does not follow a strictly Catholic line.

The whole censorship situation naturally causes concern among both film-makers and audiences in France, and several committees have been set up to combat it. In February 1954, a number of Societies of Authors, Composers and Critics met and produced a manifesto, condemning censorship in any form and pointing out that freedom of thought and expression was guaranteed by the Constitution. They said that the 1945 law lent itself to the establishment of an almost solely governmental censorship and had given rise to a large number of pre-censorship bodies, leading to timidity among producers and distributors. They demanded, finally, that no decision concerning censorship in France should be taken without a hearing being given to the authors themselves.

More recently a committee of directors has been established under the name of "Comité R"*, whose aim is to "fight against anything hindering the progress of the cinema, to defend freedom of expression, and to combat political and religious censorship. . ." This committee held a Press conference at the last Cannes Festival to announce its

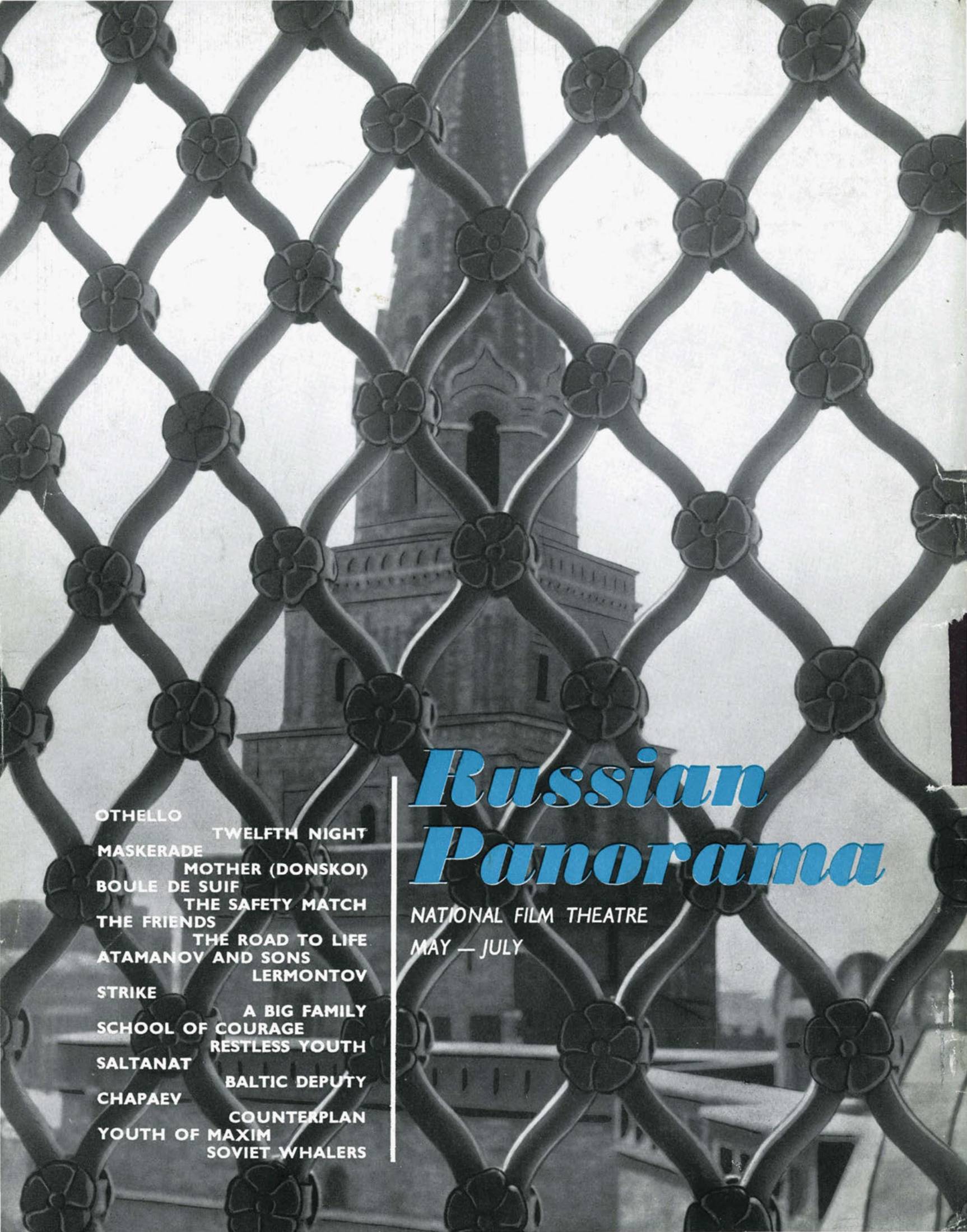
aims, and to draw attention to the problem. In spite of these movements, however, and in spite of the more liberal atmosphere which prevailed for a while under the Mendès-France government, there has been no positive change in the situation.

All this may seem strange to the English reader, accustomed as he is to seeing French films figuring prominently in the list of "X" releases. But this very fact is the result of censorship as it now exists. The ministerial representatives on the commission are so occupied with spotting any possible attack on their own particular sphere of influence that they have little time for consideration of "public morals." Thus, while a film dealing with a subject of real and topical human concern is in grave danger of being banned, inane musicals, licentious comedies, and the Americanisms of Sacha Guitry's extravagant spectacles and the gangster thrillers (of which *Touchez pas au Grisbi* and *Du Rififi chez des Hommes* are superior examples) have an almost free passage. Of course, the danger can be exaggerated, and, as Penelope Houston pointed out in a recent issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, something of the same suppressive effect is achieved in England by a generally obstructive attitude from local officials. And serious and sincere films are, naturally, still made in France. None the less, it seems true that on the whole this is rather a tribute to the tenacity and courage of the best directors than a reflection of the conditions under which the Industry tries to function—and the number of serious films completed appears to be diminishing. That a very real anxiety is felt in France at this situation is understandable, and it will be shared by everyone in Britain seriously concerned for the health of the French cinema.

*The members of this committee are as follows: Allegret, Autant-Lara, Becker, Bernard, Carné, Cayatte, Clément, Clouzot, Cocteau, Christian-Jaque, Delannoy, Gance, Gremillon, l'Herbier and Moguy.

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NATIONAL FILM THEATRE
MAY — JULY